An analytical study of Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb*

(*The Dissipater of Anxieties in the Report of the Ayyubids*)

The Political Historiography of Women in the late Ayyubid Dynasty: 589-648/1193-1250

Submitted by

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Table of Contents

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Abstract

Women's history, especially in the political arena, requires fuller treatment by research in historiography. Recent studies have largely demonstrated the extent of the discrepancy in historical narratives about the political role of women. It is a common but oversimplified explanation to state that the under-reporting of women as actors on the political stage has been due to the fact that the majority of historians and historiographers were men. Close reading of the historical text can reveal, not only insights about political activities of women, but evidence that certain male historians were paying attention to the political actions of women. Studies that analyse historical text using primary sources are crucial because they make the contents of these texts accessible to a wider audience and thus add value to the existing literature. This study is an analysis of Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, in particular, of his views regarding the political roles of Ayyubid women in the late Ayyubid dynasty. Chapter One explores the general features of Islamic historiography during the Ayyubid dynasty. Chapter Two deals with Ibn Wāṣil himself: in order to uncover the factors that had impact on him when he reported his text, it explores his life, personality, and the environment in which he lived and worked. Chapter Three examines this historian's attitude toward the *jawārī* and to the queenship system represented by Shajar al-Durr. Chapter Four examines his assessment of the regency system represented by the Ayyubid princesses, Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn. The concluding chapter discusses the research results.

List of Figures

An analytical study of Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*

(*The dissipater of anxieties in the report of the Ayyubids*)

The Political Historiography of Women in the late Ayyubid Dynasty: 589-648/1193-1250

Chapter One

Introduction

The importance of historical texts varies according to the value of the historical facts that are recorded therein. Despite the keenness of some early historians in transmitting the historical facts accurately, inevitably, some degree of distortion, errors in recording, and in assessing the historical facts could be committed by any historian, and even counterfeiting took place. The job of the historian is not limited to merely writing down historical facts, but also to dig deeper and investigate environments, social customs, and political foundations. Hence, some historical narratives often contained false information because they were intended to placate someone in power or to increase the benefit of a particular group, that is, the subjects and their chroniclers would each have a reason to fabricate the record in order to achieve their aims.[1] With this in mind, it is crucial to have modern studies that go beyond what is manifest in the historical text to seek as complete and as nuanced an account as possible.

The topic of the political history of Muslim women during the medieval Islamic period has been much debated among modern scholars in recent decades. These scholars fall into two groups: some believe that Muslim women had a significant impact on

[1] Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. Abu Ṣuhayb al-Karmī (Amman: Dār al-Muʻtaman lil-tawzīʻ, n.d.).

Islamic history as a whole, whereas others just contend that the female influence was limited to the field of architecture, and assert that men are the only engines of historical incidents. Certainly, the political history of women has been exposed to any and all of above errors. It is vital to address historical texts concerning women in order to reveal truths and facts about the influence of women in political history. Ayyubid women are one example: these ruling ladies had substantial power in the late Ayyubid supremacy. Some of those noble women were superior to male Ayyubid rulers in terms of their political acumen.

There are many factors that can encourage the historian to make mistakes. Al-Ḥaidarī identifies three factors that can influence any historian in his or her writing: the historian's education, position, and political geography.[2] Yet it seems that this view is limited; there are other factors that have a high impact on an observer-historian's approach, such as his or her religion, worldview or ideology, attitude toward the court, understanding (or misunderstanding) of events or incidents, attitude rooted in the chronicler's specific rank in society, and personal psychological situation at the time he or she recorded the history. Ibn Wāṣil (d. 697/1298)[3] is one example of a medieval Muslim chronicler. This thesis is an attempt to read in depth one of Ibn Wāṣil's texts, in particular, his *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*,[4] to extract his attitude toward the

[2] 'Abbās al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn li al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyya* (Baghdad: Dār wa Maktabat al-Baṣā'ir, 2008), pp. 234-247.

[3] The Islamic (*Hijrī*) date is shown first, followed by the Julian/Gregorian date in each case.

[4] There are four versions of the manuscript of *Mufarrij* that still exist today. The first version of these is in the Cambridge University Library, numbered 1079. It is well organized, clear, and it includes the historical events until 616/1219. There is a copy of this version in the Fu'ād al-Awwal University Library in Cairo. The second version is held in Paris, numbered 1702. There are two other copies of this version: one in the Egyptian National Library and Archives, Cairo, and the other in Alexandria University Library. This second version contains the entire work and is the most recent edition, written in 821/1418. However, it has been damaged and is therefore not in good condition. The third version of the manuscript is in better condition, and is also held in Paris, numbered 1703. This third version was copied and deposited in the Alexandria University Library. The fourth version of the manuscript is held in Istanbul. It is preserved in Mullā Gelebī's library, numbered 119, and is the oldest but the best-preserved version. There is a copy of it in

political role of women in the court of the late Ayyubid era, taking into account the above-mentioned influencing factors.

A great many historians have recorded the Ayyubid dynasty's history. Ibn Wāṣil was chosen for two reasons. First, he had witnessed the late Ayyubid reign since his childhood: he reports their history from his own earliest observations. He experienced first-hand the political events in the late Ayyubid dynasty, especially when women started to have a significant appearance in the Ayyubid court. Second, the image of the Ayyubid women in his *Mufarrij* is unique compared to portrayals by other contemporary and near-contemporary historians, especially when these women functioned as sultanas and regents.[5]

The age of the late Ayyubid dynasty is selected to be the field of this study due to the shortage of modern studies about this period. In contrast, there are a great many studies about the reign of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin: 569–589/1174–1193).[6] Even if they cover the entire history of the Ayyubid dynasty, modern scholars tend to divide their work

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Alexandria University Library but this version includes neither the historical facts concerning the beginning of the Ayyūbīd dynasty nor those regarding the end of the era..Jamāl al-Dīn, al-Shayyāl, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, by Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Sālim Ibn Wāṣil vol, 1, ed. by Jamāl al-Dīn, al-Shayyāl, 6 vols (Cairo : Maṭba'at Jāmi'at Fu'ād al-Awwal, 1953), vol.1, pp. 8-9; 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī," introduction", *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, by Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Sālim Ibn Wāṣil ed. by 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī , v (Ṣaydā; Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣrīya, 2004), vol. 6, pp. 41-42; D.S. Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids' *Ayyubid Jerusalem: the Holy City in Context 1187-1250*, eds. by Robert Hillenbrand, Sylvia auld, (s.l.: Altajir Trust, 2009), pp.456-459 (p. 458).

[5] These two points will be addressed in depth in the folowing chapters.

[6] Some examples of these studies are: 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umar 'Azzam, *Saladin* (Harlow, U.K. & New York: Pearson Longman, 2009); Bassām 'Asalī, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1982); David Nicolle, *Saladin and the Saracens: Armies of the Middle East 1100-1300* (London: Osprey, 1986); Hamilton Gibb, *The life of Saladin: Based on the Works of Baha' ad-Din Ibn Shaddad and 'Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani* (London: Saqi, 2006); Hannes Möhring, *Saladin, the Sultan and his Times*, 1138-1193, trans. by David S. Bachrach (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2008); Yaacov Lev, *Saladin in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Geoffrey Regan, *Saladin and the Fall of Jerusalem* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin: the Politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge ; New York Cambridge, 1982); Jamīl al-Maṣrī, *Shakhṣīyyat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī al-islāmīya min khilāl kitāb al-Nawādir al-sulṭāniyya li Ibn Shaddād* (Makkah: Dār Umm al-Qurā, 1922).

into two areas of study: (1) the era of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and (2) the late Ayyubid house. Furthermore, they focus attention particularly on the history of the Ayyubid sultans in Egypt, although there are studies about the history of the Ayyubids in Syria by local historiographers.[7] Therefore, this study attempts to cover the role of women in the late Ayyubid period in both Egypt and Syria equally.

In addition to the above, writing about women and their function in politics differs from one historian to another, and even from one period to another. Some feminist writers such as Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, and Nawal El Saadawi agree that although the significant role of women during the ancient and modern civilizations consisted of making history either directly or behind men, this contribution has been ignored.[8] This is because most of the history writers have been men who aspire to power and despise the marginal and vulnerable groups in society, including women. These feminist writers, especially Nawal El Saadawi, claim that there should be an attempt to reread history. This is in order to show the role of women in popular revolts against oppression and absolute power in different eras in history. Such an approach would bring justice for women and show their effort in politics through history.[9]

The present study can be counted as a new step in the field of studying the history of women in the Ayyubid period through the historical works. This thesis aims to show that in medieval Islam history was generally written by men, there are some past historians who not only gave women their rightful mention in history along with men but

[7] See the literature review section.

[8] Fatima Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt: nisā' ḥākimāt fī bilād al-Islām*, trans. by Fāṭima al-Zahrā' Azruwīl 3rd edn (Casablanca: Nashr al-Fanak, 2010), pp. 20,22 ; Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven & London: Yale, 1992) p. 104; Nawal El Saadawi, *'An al-mar'a* (Cairo: Dār al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabī, 1988), p. 9; Nawal El Saadawi and Hiba Ra'ūf 'Izzat, *al-Mar'a wa-al-dīn wa-al-akhlāq* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2000), pp. 24-25.

[9] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 104; El Saadawi, *'An al-mar'a*, p. 9; El Saadawi and 'Izzat, *al-Mar'a*, pp. 24-25.

sometimes preferred a woman's policy over that of her contemporary male rulers. Therefore, this thesis attempts to explore the political role of women in the late Ayyubid dynasty. By examining the *Mufarrij* of Ibn Wāṣil, it seeks to establish the extent to which medieval Islamic historiography adequately represented the political activities of women during this age and argues that they can best be explored by studying the writings of contemporary Islamic historians and intellectuals. Additionally, this study explores the various political roles that women played in the late Ayyubid dynasty to achieve power as queens and regents, whilst highlighting a wide range of factors that influenced the various elements of this representation.

In order to understand the characteristics of Ibn Wāṣil's works it is useful to give a brief summary of the common features of Islamic historiography during his age.

Islamic Historiography during the Ayyubid Dynasty

Ayyubid history is a major focus of medieval Islamic historiography. In this section, there is an examination of the features of historical works by the historians of the Ayyubid period. The most well-known Ayyubid historians beside Ibn Wāṣil are Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh*; 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī (d. 597/1201), *al-Fatḥ al-qussī fī al-Fatḥ al-qudsī*; Ibn Shaddād (d. 632/1235), *al-Nawādir al-sulṭāniyya wa al-maḥāsin al-yūsufiyya*; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), *Mir'āt al-zamān fī ta'rīkh al-'ayān*; Abū Shāma (d. 665/1267), *al-Rawḍatyn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn*; and Ibn al-'Adīm (d. 660-1262), *Zubdat al-ḥalab min ta'rīkh Ḥalab*.[10] This section therefore will be presented in two main parts: part one is about the new characteristics that emerged in writing the history during the Ayyubid epoch (these features appeared in relation to the political nature of that period), and how this period differed from the previous stage of writing

[10] Francesco Gabrieli, 'Arabic historiography', trans. by M. S. Khan, *Islamic Studies,* 2 /18 (Summer 1979), 81-95.

Islamic history. Part two is about the historians' technique of writing history. This part helps in understanding the features of Ibn Wāṣil's text.

Features of Islamic historiography during the Ayyubid period

It can be said that one remarkable feature of Islamic historiography in the seventh and eighth/thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is that Muslim historians liberated themselves in their writing from the theological influence, and they tended to focus more on documenting the present; they reported political facts independently, without the religious link that was common before.[11] Khalidi posits the reasons that this kind of history became prominent. He believes that the political situation had its impact on the Islamic historiography at that moment. One reason was that the presence of the Crusaders and the Mongols created horror among Muslims; therefore, the contemporary historians reported these political events under the impact of this factor, reflecting the feeling of terror. Another reason linked with the former one is that Muslims were affected by the fighting spirit generated by these invasions, and this paved the way to increase the power of military governments. Thus, history came to be in the service of politics.[12]

Another noticeable feature of Islamic historiography during the Ayyubid period is that there is a strong link between writing the history of the Ayyubid house and accurately depicting the history of the Crusades.[13] The Muslim historians of the Ayyubids are also the main sources of the history of the Crusaders in the Middle East. For example, modern scholars who study the Arabic sources of the Crusade's history depend on some of the

[11] Donald P. Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamluk Epochs', in *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (640/1517), ed. Carl F. Petry, 2 vols, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) , vol. 1, pp. 412-444, (p. 413); Muṣṭafā Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī, dirāsa fī taṭawwur 'ilm al-ta'rīkh wa-ma'rifat rijālihi fī al-Islām*, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-'ilm lil-Malayīn, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 446-447, 452; Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 182

[12] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 183.

[13] Gabrieli, 'Arabic historiography', 91.

Ayyubids' contemporary or near-contemporary historians.[14] The quantity of Muslim historiography about the Crusades during the seventh and eighth/thirteenth and fourteenth centuries increased compared to the former centuries.[15] It can be assumed that Islamic historiography about the history of Muslims increased too, during the Ayyubid epoch. This contrasted with the situation at the beginning of the Crusader campaigns in the fifth/eleventh century, when Muslim historians did not realize the impact and the danger of the Crusader invasions.[16] Gabrieli interprets this attitude from the Muslim historians by stating that Muslim historians' compilation of records concerning the Crusaders at the beginning of the campaign was generated by a sense of superiority over the invaders. That is, the threat was not taken seriously and so the topic was not covered in great detail in their writings.[17] Shākir attributes the increase in Islamic historiography during this period to two factors: political change and cultural growth.[18] The political atmosphere had a more significant impact, possibly due to the high achievements of the Zangid (521-569/1127-1174), Ayyubid (569-647/1174-1250), and Mamluk (647-923/1250-1517) sultans against the Crusades compared to the former Islamic forces. The Islamic jihad against the Crusaders started successfully in the Zangid dynasty.[19] However, once Ṣalāḥ

[14] There are many examples of modern scholars who depended on their work about the Crusaders, such as Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr, *al-Ḥaraka al-ṣalībiyya*, 2 vols. , 4th edn, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Maṣriyya, 1986); Alex Mallett (ed.), *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Peter Jackson, 'The Crusades of 1239-41 and their aftermath', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 50/1 (1987), 32-60; Francesco Gabrieli, 'Historiography of the Crusades', in Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 89-107; Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, trans. by E. J. Costello (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969). M. Ahmad, 'Latin and Muslim historiography of the Crusades: a comparative study of William of Tyre and Izz al-Din Ibn Al-Athir', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania (1990).

[15] Ahmad, 'Latin and Muslim historiography of the Crusades', p.72; Gabrieli, 'Historiography of the Crusades', p. 99.

[16] M. Ahmad, 'Latin and Muslim historiography of the Crusades', p. 52.

[17] Gabrieli, 'Arabic historiography', 89-99.

[18] Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 1, p. 239.

[19] Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 112 & 172.

al-Dīn founded the Ayyubid state in 569/1174, he devoted the majority of his life to fighting them. His effort was crowned by beating them in the Battle of Hattin in 583/1183 when he began his series of victories that continued until 588/1192.[20] He captured Jerusalem in 583/1183, and then attacked the north of Syria.[21] As a result of Salāḥ al-Dīn's triumphs against the Crusaders, he then had to face the Third Crusade in the same year, and this conflict ended with the Treaty of Ramla in 588/1192.[22] Due to the improvement in the Islamic forces' policy toward the Crusades, the historians found politically valuable information that they recorded proudly. Another political factor for the increase in Muslim historians' reports during the Ayyubid era was that these historians had gradually became more aware of the threat posed by the Crusaders, since the majority of historians concentrated their writing on the conflict between the Crusaders and the Muslims.[23] Some historians may have been influenced by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's character and his enthusiasm for military strategy. This was likely the case with his close friends who were witness to most of his victories against the Crusaders, such as the historian ʻImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, who asserts in the introduction of his book *al-Fatḥ al-qussī* that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn "uses his pen as if it were a sword in order to combat the Crusaders".[24] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's close associate Ibn Shaddād wrote a biography about him titled *al-Nawādir al-sulṭāniyya*, [25]

[20] Saʻīd ʻAbd al-Fattāḥ, ʻĀshūr, *Miṣr wa al-Shām fī ʻaṣr al-Ayyūbiyīn wa al-Mamālīk* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʻArabiyya, 1972), p. 59.

[21] ʻAlī ibn Muhammad ʻIzz al-Din Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi al-tā'rikh*, 9 vols (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1978), vol. 9, pp.182-188.

[22] Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 172; ʻĀshūr, *al-Ḥaraka al-ṣalībiyya*, vol. 2, p. 659.

[23] ʻAbbās al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn li al-hurūb al-ṣalībiyya* (Baghdad: Dār wa Maktabat al-Baṣāʻir, 2008), p. 96.

[24] ʻImād al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Kātib al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥurub Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa fatḥ Bayt al-Maqdis: wa-huwa al-kitāb al-musammā, al-Fatḥ al-qussī fī al-Fatḥ al-qudsī*, ed. by Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn, 2 edn, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, n.d).

[25] Bahā' al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Rāfī Ibn Shaddād, *al-Nawādir al-sulṭāniyya wa al-maḥāsin al-yūsufiyya, aw, sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, ed. Jamāl al-Din al-Shayyāl (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya, 1964).

Another feature characterizing the Islamic historiography of this era is the strong appearance of the '*ulamā'* in writing this kind of history. Little asserts that this was because the military governments at that time sought acknowledgement from the '*ulamā'* in order to have their legitimacy reinforced by this group, which would also have helped the sultans in their struggle against their enemies, especially the Crusaders and the Mongols.[26] This explains the abundance of contemporary biographical work. Those figures were courtiers under the service of the rulers, and thus would have been interested in writing about those rulers and their political behaviour. The best example of this is Ibn Wāṣil himself, in his books *Muffarij* and *al-Ta'rikh al-ṣāliḥī*, which latter was written about al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn (637-646/1240-1249).[27]

Yet another group of historians lent their support to the government. This group consisted of secretaries and *kuttāb* (scribes) in the court. They used their talent in writing to present the ruler's virtues, and contributed to the writing of history in the fourth/tenth centuries. Both groups were able at times to access official documents, and they used these sources in their writing.[28] Using official documents in writing history is another salient feature of Islamic historiography at that time. This contributed to the preservation of Ayyubid archives.[29] The historians' aim was to support their work with documentary evidence to confirm their narrations,[30] including reports about famous persons such as

[26] Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyubid', p. 413; Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 192.

[27] Konrad Hirschler, 'Social Contexts of Medieval Arabic Historical Writing: Court Scholars Versus Ideal/Withdrawn Scholars Ibn Wāsil and Abu Šāma', *in Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras, IV: proceedings of the 9th and 10th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 2000 and May 2001*, ed by, U. Vermeulen and J. van Steenbergen (Leuven: Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), pp. 311-331 (p. 311); Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyubid', p. 413.

[28] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 184.

[29] Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyubid', p. 414.

[30] Shākir, *al-Tā'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 1, p. 381.

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn,[31] or to demonstrate their own abilities and power through their narratives.[32] A historian's method of using documents might also have stemmed from his desire to act as an example to later generations. For example, ʿImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī was highly skilled in writing and may have intended to set out how such documents could be written.

During the late Ayyubid epoch the Syrian historians played a more significant role than the Egyptian historians did in recording this particular period.[33] This possibly can be illustrated from a political point of view. The political weight of the Ayyubid was in Egypt and the late Crusaders campaigns were directed toward Egypt, but since 490/1097 the real presence of the Crusaders was in Syria, in their Kingdom of Jerusalem and the states of Acre, Tripoli, and Antioch.[34] It might be that the direct impact of the Crusaders on Syrian historians was higher than on Egyptian historians. Moreover, Syria was seriously affected by the Mongol attack after the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate in 656/1258.[35]

Methods and systems of Muslim historians

Indeed, the historians of this period followed the former historians in their techniques. This part will be presented briefly in three sections: Muslim historical sources concerning the Ayyubid epoch; the Muslim historians' methods; and finally, the different motives behind the historical narratives.

[31] M. Ḥilmī and M. Aḥmad, 'Some notes on Arabic historiography during the Zengid and Ayyubid periods (521-648/1127-1250)', in Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 84; Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought,* p. 184.

[32] Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 145-147; Gabrieli, 'Arabic historiography', p. 86.

[33] Konrad Hirschler, 'Social Contexts ', p. 311.

[34] ʿĀshūr, *Miṣr wa-al-Shām,* p. 9; Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades,* p. 20.

[35] ʿAlī al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār bayna al-intishār wa-al-inkisār* (Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2009), p. 180.

To begin with the history sources, Muslim historians predominantly employed orally transferred narratives as one of their methods of collecting material and recording their works. This method was common before the Ayyubid period as most writers were specialists in the Quran, the Hadith (*ḥadīth*), and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).[36] Their techniques of historiography were influenced by the method of *isnād* (chains of narration), that is, a system which evaluates the soundness of a hadith or other narration based on the narrator's permission to transfer the information from direct witnesses.[37] In the fourth/tenth century, history began to be an independent subject. As a result, historians ignored the *isnād* and focused more on recording events that had been reported by eyewitnesses. The fact that they often mentioned their sources indicates that they made a great effort to find the truth. For example, Ibn al-Athīr in his book *al-Kāmil* frequently included such phrases as 'my father told me' or 'I was told by friends'.[38] Furthermore, in their introductions to their works some Muslim historians state that they had been selective and accurate, using only trusted sources for the gathering of information. Examples of this are 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī in his book *al-Fatḥ* and Ibn Shaddād in his biography *al-Nawādir*.[39] Nevertheless, it is difficult to evaluate the exact extent of the accuracy of the narrations. In addition, although the historian himself believes that he did his best to be accurate in writing his history, the historian is definitely affected by his own ideology and conceptions of the world.[40]

Another approach that Muslim historians employed was to gather accounts of direct observations of events, for example on the battlefield, from participants or

[36] Ḥilmī and Aḥmad, 'Notes on Arabic historiography', p. 80.

[37] Robinson, *Islamic historiography*, p. 16.

[38] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, p. 78; Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 1, pp. 378- 379.

[39] al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Fatḥ al-qussī fī al-Fatḥ al-qudsī,* p 47; Ibn Shaddād, *al-Nawādir al-sulṭāniyya*, p. 15.

[40] Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 19.

government employees. Ibn Shaddād's narrative in *al-Nawādir* is based mainly on his personal observation.[41] Yet even this source may have been influenced by two elements: it is simply not possible for a historian to cover every single detail, and his perception and understanding of the event would invariably have influenced his description of it.

Documents provided another important source for Muslim historians.[42] There are two methods in using such documents: either to cite from documents directly, as 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī and Abū Shāma did, or merely to mention the content of certain documents rather than using them as evidence or quoting from them, as Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Shaddād did.[43] Some Muslim historians simply borrowed from other historians in their own writing. Ibn al-Athīr obtained some information from 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, whilst Abū Shāma and Ibn Wāṣil sometimes used materials from previous historians such as Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Shaddād, and ʿImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī.[44] During the Ayyubid era the majority of historians were themselves eyewitnesses. As a result, their testimonies, especially those from Egypt and Syria, were the most crucial of historians' reports. However, Iraqi historians depended on what they heard about these same events.[45] Thus it can be said that the Egyptian and the Syrian historians' narrations might be more accurate and vital due to their proximity to the heart of the event.

Regarding the methodology of writing history, Al-Ḥaīdery asserts that during the Ayyubid dynasty Muslim historians adopted two main methods of organizing their historical narratives: they placed them in chronological order or they arranged them by

[41] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, p. 79.

[42] Ḥilmī and Aḥmad, 'Notes on Arabic Historiography', p. 84.

[43] Ḥilmī and Ahmad, 'Notes on Arabic Historiography', p. 84; Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 1, p. 381; Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 184.

[44] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 89-90.

[45] Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 1, p.219.

subject.[46] The former was the most preferred approach. Even though he used the *isnād* approach, a good example of this is al-Ṭabarī's work (d. 310/923) *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk* during the fourth/tenth century.[47] *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawhar* by al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956) is a good representative of the second approach. This method was used effectively at the end of the third/ninth and the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. Subsequently it became less popular, and the chronological method, having gained the reputation of being a "better" system, became more widespread, especially after the appearance of al-Ṭabarī's work.[48]

By employing these two distinct approaches, the historians wrote different types of historical narratives. The first had the form of a universal history.[49] This kind of work begins with a depiction of the history of the previous nations, and continues until a given author's death; and sometimes, another historian completed the work after he died. A good example of this is the work of Ibn al-Jawzī.[50] Rosenthal highlights that in this kind of history, the most vital record is the part concerning the historian's own era, because outside that period, historians tended to transmit the facts without making any comments regarding former events.[51] Historians who relay such information trust their sources based on the reputation of the historians from whom they transmit, yet they may not have realized the original author's agenda in his writing. Muslim authors continued to use the chronological method, but this had the effect of obstructing an improvement in historical

[46] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 96-97.

[47] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 97-98; Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyubid', p. 415; al-Sayyīd 'Abd al-'Azīz Sālim, *al-Ta'rīkh wa al-mu'arrikhūn al-'Arab* (Alexandria: Mu'assasat Shabāb al-Jāmi'a, 1981), pp. 85-86.

[48] Sālim, *al-Ta'rīkh wa al-mu'arrikhūn*, p. 129.

[49] Ahmad, Latin and Muslim Historiography of the Crusades, p. 61; Sālim, *al-Ta'rīkh wa al-mu'arrikhūn*, p. 97.

[50]; Ahmad, Latin and Muslim historiography of the Crusades, pp. 61-62; al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 98-99.

[51] Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd. edn (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 119-120.

thought in the later period. This technique became ineffectual at that time because of the changes in the economic, social, and political circumstances. Some historians realized this, and in fact they found this method tedious, hence they not only avoided this method, but also criticized it. For example, Ibn al-Athīr made a considerable effort to integrate an event into other events that took place in the same year, rather than separating them, in order to facilitate and enhance the reader's understanding.[52] Therefore, the genre of historiography by subject started to reappear.[53] This included the record of events surrounding the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate and the Ayyubid dynasty together with the appearance of the Mongols and the Mamluk dynasty, which were to become the main powers in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.[54]

The second type of historical narrative is based on a depiction of local history. This type is the result of the political disintegration of the Islamic world, whereby it was divided into many polities.[55] As a demonstration of patriotic feeling, each author wanted to record his local history for posterity. The appeal of writing this kind of history increased as historians felt the effects of the fragmentation of their society after the advent of the Crusaders. Ibn al-ʿAdīm's work exemplifies this type of historical narration.[56]

The history of states and dynasties is the third genre; it uses a chronological method.[57] This genre started with the independence of states in the fourth/tenth century, especially after the Seljuks' gradual demise and the appearance of atabegs (*atābiq*: Seljuk

[52] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 105-106; Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyubid', p. 415.

[53] Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī,* vol, 2, p. 349.

[54] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, p. 130.

[55] Gabrieli, 'Arabic historiography', p. 87.

[56] Sālim, *al-Ta'rīkh wa-al-mu'arrikhūn,* p. 110; Sami Dahan, 'The origin and development of the local histories of Syria', in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, p. 108; Ahmad, Latin and Muslim Historiography of the Crusades, p. 61.

[57] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography,* p. 139.

regents) in the sixth/twelfth century, and was in use during the Zangid and the Ayyubid dynasties in the north of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt.[58] In their writing, historians questioned the establishment and consequent decline of these states. Some, such as Ibn Wāṣil, wrote about a specific dynasty: the Ayyubid. But others wrote simultaneously about several states, as Abū Shāma did with the Ayyubids and Zangids. This kind of historical work deals with one specific state, the life of its founder, and his family, in places such as Egypt or Syria.[59]

The fourth type of historiography encompasses biographies and personal diaries. This genre relies on the author's personal experience whilst often being written according to the ruler's wishes in order to provide a record of his achievements that could be passed on to following generations.[60] Its purpose was to enable readers to gain wisdom from the lessons of history.[61] Biographies tended to be written in an ornamental style suited to the status of the elites, as the authors were secretaries or decision makers.[62] For instance, Ibn Shaddād wrote *al-Nawādir* in a manner that adapted the very elevated style of writing and transformed ornamental language into a simpler and more accessible prose form. Due to their nature, these two genres, the dynastic and the diaries, were structured according to the subject.

[58] Atabeg is a Turkish term that is a combination of two words: ata which means 'father' or 'breeder' and. 'bik' meaning 'prince'. The total meaning is 'breeder of a prince'. The first who carried this title was the minister Niẓām al-Mulk in 465 /1073 during the Seljuk era. The atabegs were chosen by the Seljuk sultans to educate the sultan's children. They were selected from the class of leaders and senior men of the state. If the sultan appointed one of his sons to rule any city or territory, he sent his atabeg with the child to help the child in dealing with political affairs. Some atabegs tended to exploit their influence and dominate the young princes to make their own state during the weak period of the Seljuk state. See Muhammad Suhayl Taqqush, *Ta'rīkh al-Zankīyīn fī al-Mawṣil wa-bilād al-Shām, 521-630 H/1127-1233 M,* 2nd edn, (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 2010), pp. 41-42.

[59] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 113-114.

[60] Rosenthal, *History of Muslim Mistoriography*, p. 236.

[61] Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī,* vol. 1, p. 367.

[62] Rosenthal, *History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 236.

Although historians wrote from the position of eyewitnesses, they sometimes omitted certain events and facts from their records.[63] According to Rosenthal, politics had an impact on Muslim historians, even when they desired to report the truth.[64] This explains why both Ibn Shaddād and ʻImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī introduced Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in their records as an extraordinary Muslim leader.

Urban history, the fifth genre, focuses on Islamic civilization and administration in Islamic states. The best example of this is *Qawānīn al-dawāwīn*, a work compiled by Ibn Mamatā (d. 606/1209) who was an Ayyubid minister. The author discusses several topics of the Ayyubid era in three main areas: the geography of Egypt, the governance systems, and agricultural affairs.[65]

The sixth type of historical writing is the *tarājim*, or biographical dictionaries, which involve the recording of information about a group of people who were classified according to their social class or occupation.[66] Examples of this are *Usūd al-ghāba fī maʻrifat al-ṣaḥāba*. by Ibn al-Athīr in the sixth/twelfth century. This work is a biographical compendium of more than seven thousand companions of the Prophet Muhammad, presented in alphabetical order. Another example is *wafayāt al-aʻyān wa-anbā' al-zamān* by Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) that was written in the seventh/thirteenth century, a compendium of the biographies of more than eight hundred and fifty Muslim notables, including caliphs, sultans, kings (*mulūk*, sg. *malik*), and ministers.[67]

[63] Sālim, *al-Ta'rīkh wa-al-mu'arrikhūn*, p. 125.

[64] Rosenthal, *History of Muslim Historiography*, pp. 90-91.

[65] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, p. 154; Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyubid', p. 419.

[66] Gabrieli, 'Arabic Historiography', 88.

[67] Hamilton Gibb, 'Islamic Biographical Literature', in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, p. 55; Ḥilmī and Aḥmad, 'Notes on Arabic Historiography', p. 83.

Muslim historians had a variety of motives when writing their histories and all of these would apply to Ibn Wāṣil's work. First, there was a religious purpose, since history was linked with Islamic sciences at the beginning, especially with the *hadīth*. It is clear that in these writings God is the ultimate ruler and mover of history: whatever happened was his will.[68]

The second goal of history writing was to provide political lessons to both the public and the authorities.[69] Historians attempted to justify the rulers' actions or reigns and to give them legitimacy. According to their belief, the ruler is God's vicegerent on earth, even if he is oppressive.[70] Therefore, Ibn al-Athīr wrote his book *al-Bāhir fī ta'rīkh al-dawla al-atābiqiyya* about the Zangids with the same purpose that of Ibn Shaddād and ʻImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī when they wrote about Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: to display the ruler's virtues. As a matter of fact, if there is any criticism present in their works it is never overt, especially in the case of rulers by whom the historians were employed. In some cases, the authors wrote their works of history well after the events occurred, in order to create a balanced account. Ibn Shaddād and ʻImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī completed their works after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death and during the conflict between his successors. This unfavourable political position caused them to want to show the new rulers the best model of an ideal Muslim ruler, and to advise Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's successors.

The third goal in writing history was ethical or moral.[71] The writers wanted to provide educational lessons to the masses after witnessing what they perceived as an

[68] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 129.

[69] Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-ʻarabī*, vol. 1, p. 453

[70] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 133.

[71] Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-ʻarabī*, vol. 2, p. 453.

increasing decline in morals.[72] They did so through writing about the Islamic model of appropriate living, using the lives of the prophets and stories highlighting the difference between leading one's life as a doer of good or as a wrongdoer. The main purpose behind writing biographies was, therefore, to guide and admonish people.[73] As mentioned earlier, some historians felt they ought to resist the Crusader and Mongol invasions by relating how the early Muslims had dealt with threatening and traumatic events. The historians' objective was to enhance Muslims' motivation and strength to face contemporary hazards.[74]

The fourth goal was a scientific one. The writer's account of history represented a form of knowledge that helped people to broaden their experience and give them the ability to make better judgments. This was Abū Shāma's purpose, which he acknowledges in his book. Although Muslim historians tried to preserve the scientific features of their records, they did this to a lesser extent after the rise of Sufism (mysticism), when the notion of dreams and superstitions became more influential.[75]

Literature Review

There are a number of modern studies relating to the chosen topic and some of these are particularly useful in connection with the subject of this thesis. These studies offer information on Ibn Wāṣil himself, or concern relevant matters pertaining to accounts of his *Mufarrij*. It is, therefore, worth conducting a review of these studies; in this section, four main sources of materials shall be considered. First, general Islamic historiographical studies that attempt to offer a critical study of a primary source will be given attention.

[72] Gabrieli, 'Arabic Historiography', 86; Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 188.

[73] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 221-222; Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 188.

[74] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 184.

[75] al-Ḥaidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn*, pp. 224 -226.

Second, modern scholars' works regarding Ibn Wāṣīl and his *Mufarrij* shall be examined very briefly by way of acknowledging existing criticism, even though they are not strictly relevant to this research. Third, studies directly connected with the dynasty that is the focus of this thesis will be considered. Fourth, feminist studies about the political position of women in medieval Islamic history should be given attention. The objective of using these types of material is to establish a link between Ibn Wāṣīl's methodologies as he applied these in his historical narrative and the general trend in Islamic historiography during the medieval period. Moreover, the aim of this presentation is to assess the accuracy of the historical sources that were written by other contemporary historians in the same age and to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of many aspects of the topic in order to aid in examining the text.

General Islamic historiography

There are two kinds of modern Islamic historiographical studies: general and specific. To commence with the first type, one of the earliest works Rosenthal's 1952 *A History of Muslim Historiography*.[76] It is an attempt by the scholar to explore the problems in Islamic historiography. Rosenthal's study is divided into two main sections: the first deals with social and environmental circumstances, suggesting that his approach has been superseded by later writers, who have taken a wider perspective; the second presents some historians and discusses a small number of their works. The study does not cover a large number of Muslim historians, and it is described as over-generalization as there is a lack of detailed input from specific research; however, it provides an overview of Arabic historical writing.

[76] Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

More than a quarter-century later, the Arabic scholar Muṣṭafā Shākir issued his book *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī wa al-mu'arrikhūn* in two volumes in 1980.[77] This study is very useful as Shākir provides details about the improvement of Islamic historiography from its origins and shows the features of each phase. Shākir explores the impact of the geographical element on the nature of the writing. At the same time, he surveys each region's historians such as those of Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Yemen. Although he mentions a great number of historians, he marginalizes some important scholars such as Ibn Wāṣil, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Taghrībirdī.

In 1993, Ḥasan 'Uthmān presented his crucial book *Manhaj al-baḥth al-ta'rīkhī*.[78] The study seeks to guide the modern researchers through history to the correct steps of dealing with the historical research, from the initial step of choosing the topic of the study to the final step: presenting the related historical facts in a scientific way. 'Uthmān gives attention to history as a field of study, its value, and its relationships with other type of sciences. 'Uthmān's work aims to help the modern researchers in choosing the topic of research, collecting the relevant materials, studying the sources of the topic, and organizing and then presenting its ideas. The most significant part of the book is his explanation of how to analyse the historical text. He gives details of how the modern researchers can approach the external meaning of the text and how to infer the internal meaning from the same text. To investigate Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij* in depth, this thesis will depend on 'Uthmān's recommended steps in analysing the historical text.

Another valuable study appeared in 1994, by the Palestinian scholar Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*; Khalidi investigates to what extent the

[77] Shākir, Muṣṭafa, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī wa al-mu'arrikhūn: Dirāsa fī taṭawwur 'ilm al-ta'rīkh wa-ma'rifat rijālihi*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malayīn, 1980).

[78] Ḥasan 'Uthmān, *Manhaj al-baḥth al-ta'rīkhī*, 11th edn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1993).

Arab-Islamic culture affected the way of writing the past during the pre-modern era.[79] It deals with historians' methods of expressing their concepts about the past. He follows in his writing the changes that are evident in the classical Arabic–Islamic historical records taking into account the impact of four factors in writing history: *hadīth*, literature, *ḥikma* (cultural or religious understanding), and politics. However, in Khalidi's work there are two methodological flaws: it fails to define its central focus, historical thought, and it does not take sufficient account of secondary sources.

In 1998, Donald P. Little produced his article, 'Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk epochs', as part of *The Cambridge History of Egypt*. He makes a positive contribution that offers a richer analysis of the sources, and presents a survey of the historical thought during the Ayyubid and Mamluk ages.[80] This is by combining the contextual approach with the source-critical/factual approach. However, he continues to use only source materials that have implicitly been selected according to existing source-value criteria.

Carole Hillenbrand's *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (1999) assesses the Muslim response to the Crusades, based on what is written by the old Muslim historians. The book includes many who are Ayyubid historians, such as Ibn Wāṣil. The author deals with this subject in terms of the impact of the Crusades on Muslim society, militarily, culturally, and psychologically, through the interaction between the Muslim and the Christian cultures. The book includes some citations from the old Arabic historical texts. Hillebrand uses these texts as a resource for her topic, but not from a historiography aspect. Moreover, she does not give much attention to the history of Ayyubid women.

[79] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994).

[80] Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamluk Epochs', pp. 412-444.

F. Chase Robinson's worthy study of *Islamic Historiography* (2003) is divided into three parts. The first deals with origins and categories of the historians, whereas the second part concentrates on several aspects of the context of Islamic history. The final section discusses the manner in which historians produced their works. Robinson attempts to provide a significant criticism of a number of Islamic historical sources; however, it is clear that his examination of these materials is not particularly deep, as he does not devote enough space to a specific analysis of the discussed historians' works.

The second type of study in Islamic historiography is the genre that examines a particular subject, such as the 1926 work entitled 'Some Notes on Arabic Historiography during the Zangid and Ayyubid Periods (521-648/1127-1250*)'* by the Arab scholars M. Ḥilmī and M. Aḥmad.[81] The authors inform readers about the Islamic historiography features during the specified period, focusing mainly on the intellectual aspect. Ḥilmī and Aḥmad mention the education of the *'ulamā'* and discuss their role in both the writing of history and its improvement. The text asserts the crucial factors that encouraged the *'ulamā'* to record the history during the Zangid and Ayyubid periods. First, the importance of religion in increasing the historians' motivation in writing their history: it was a significant impetus behind the interest on the part of the *'ulamā'* in writing their historical works due to the strong link between history and the Hadith. Second, the historian's job is another significant factor, since some *'ulamā'* had official posts in the state that allowed them to participate in political and/or military affairs. Therefore, they left copious works including information regarding some official documents. This study sheds light on the value of the historical texts, as these historians were either eyewitnesses of the described events, or were selective with their material when they had not witnessed

[81] M. Ḥilmī and M. Aḥmad, 'Some Notes on Arabic Historiography during the Zengid and Ayyubid Periods (521-648/1127-1250), eds. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt, *Historians of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

the events in person. Overall, the study by Ḥilmī and Aḥmad presented here is of a general nature, since historians have been mainly mentioned in passing.

Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn li al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībiyya, written in 2008 by the Iraqi specialist 'Abbās al-Ḥaidarī, offers several benefits with regard to this PhD dissertation. This study covers the Zangid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk states.[82] In his study, the author demonstrates the main features of Islamic historiography during the Crusades era, insofar as he concentrates mainly on the Islamic intellectual environment in order to study its development and decline, together with the manner in which it influenced Muslim historians' writing. Moreover, this study measures the extent to which Muslim historians realized the influence of the Crusades on the Islamic world, and how it affected them in terms of their attitude, evaluation, and interpretation of this invasion. In addition, the author of this study explains how the location and the writer's character together with his function in society had an impact on Muslim historians' writing. Despite the significance of this study and the fact that it includes about the Ayyubid historians, it discusses the historians' writing from the perspective of the Crusader era, which means that it thematically differs from the presented PhD thesis. In addition, it does not include an analysis of Ibn Wāṣīl's work.

A further study in 2012 is an article entitled 'Islamic Historians of the Ayyubid Era and Muslim Rulers from the Early Crusading Period: A Study in the Use of History' by Alex Mallett.[83] This article discusses the image of Muslim rulers' policies during the early Crusader era 490-540/1097-1146 in the chronicles of Muslim historians who lived

[82] 'Abbās al-Haidarī, *Ru'yat al-mu'arrikhīn al-Muslimīn li al-hurūb al-salībiyya* (Baghdad: Dār wa Maktabat al-Baṣā'ir, 2008).

[83] Alex Mallett, 'Islamic Historians of the Ayyubid Era and Muslim Rulers from the Early Crusading Period: a Study in the Use of History', *Al-Masāq* 24/3 (2012), 241-252.

under Ayyubid rule. This study focuses mainly on the themes, ideas, and topics of the historic text.

It deals with six main Muslim authors who lived in the same period, one of whom was Ibn Wāṣīl. The author analyses the influences affecting these historians in their attitude towards the ruler's policy from two aspects: political life and the historian's personal opinion of the ruler. Mallett examines the extent to which the relationship with the elites affected each historian's narrative. He uses a sample of six rulers, whereby he explains how each historian made his own presentation of these rulers. Finally, he tries to interpret the reasons for the variances in the historians' attitudes by focusing on geographical location, relationships with the authorities, and the ethnicity specific to a given historian. Although this article is of great importance, it deals with the early Crusader period, thus it is not entirely within the main focus of this study.

Zayde Antrim's work on Ayyubid and Mamluk historiography focuses on "place". The first of these (2010) is 'Waṭan before Waṭaniyya: Loyalty to Land in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Syria.[84] In this article she presents the implications of the meaning of the term *waṭan* (homeland) in the Islamic sources regarding Syria, especially in Damascus and Aleppo, in terms of place of residence, familial place and homeland. Drawing upon historical sources such as 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād's *Al-a'lāq al-khaṭira fi dhikr umarā' al-Shām wa al-Jazīra* and ʿImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī's *Al-fatḥ al-qussī*, Antrim analyzes the different terms that refer to *waṭan* and indicate patriotism and homesickness. She examines the impact of "place" on political and religious loyalty even in modern day works.

[84] Zayde Antrim, 'Waṭan before Waṭaniyya: Loyalty to Land in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Syria', *Al-Masāq* 22/ 2 (2010), 173-190.

Antrim's second piece is a short chapter, 'Jerusalem in the Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods'.[85] It deals with the historiography of Jerusalem during the Ayyubid and Mamluk regimes from three aspects: architectural patronage, its *faḍā'il* (virtues) literature, and pilgrimage. As with her earlier work, Antrim relies on the main Islamic sources about Jerusalem during this period, such as *al-Fatḥ al-qussī* and *al-A'lāq al-khaṭira.* The topic of this chapter is not relevant to the present study, as nothing is mentioned about *Mufarrij* or about the Ayyubid women.

Antrim's work has centred on the "discourse of place", which she defines as "a conceptual framework that brings together a wide variety of texts committed either wholly or in large part to the representation of places."[86] In her third article, 'The discourse of place in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Syria: A politics of scale' (2018), Antrim argues that between the latter half of the 6th/12th century and the first half of the 8th/14th century the contemporary discourses of place expanded from "city-centric", such as those of Damascus, Jerusalem and Aleppo by Ibn al-'Asākir (d. 571/1176), to the representation by Ibn Shaddād in the late 7th/13th century of geographically proximate city-states comprising a single cohesive region, "Syria", and finally to the concept of a "superregion made up of the combined territories of Egypt, Syria, and the Ḥijāz". Antrim's works on historiography have no relevance for this study of Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij* and the Ayyubid women.

[85] Zayde Antrim, 'Jerusalem in the Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods', in *Jerusalem,* ed. Suleiman Mourad, Bedross Der Matossian, and Naomi Koltun-Fromm (New York: Routledge, 2018) , pp. 102-109.

[86] Zayde Antrim, 'The discourse of place in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Syria: A politics of scale', in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk Eras* IX, pp. 33-43, Kristof D'hulster, Gino Schallenbergh, and Jo Van Steenbergen, eds. (Leuven: Peeters, 2018).

Ibn Wāṣil

In addition to the studies that are strongly relative to the chosen topic, a number of works in this section are not directly related to the specific focus of this research but should be mentioned as part of an overview of the available literature.

Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij* began to be studied in the mid-twentieth century. The earliest study (1961) includes an article in Arabic by Muṣṭafā Jawād.[87] This article was selected for its criticism of the work of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl who was the editor of the first three volumes of *Mufarrij*. Jawād's aim is to highlight al-Shayyāl's mistakes in his work in the second volume of Ibn Wāṣil's book. Thus, the study can be considered as a form of an assessment of Jamāl al-Din al-Shayyāl's effort as an editor.

One valuable study is by Charis Waddy (1972), entitled 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East: Based on the Life of Ibn Wasil, Contemporary Historian of the Ayyubid Dynasty'.[88] Waddy's article can be considered to be a rather rapid and general reading of the text of Ibn Wāṣil's book. Beginning with the meaning of *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, Waddy tries to convey Ibn Wāṣil's message through his book as he saw the world through the lens of both distress and hope. This is followed by an analysis of the sources used by Ibn Wāṣil in his narrations. Waddy asserts that *Mufarrij* is significant because it is not simply a chronicle, for it includes poems and character sketches together with detailed reviews of different contemporary affairs. An example of this is a story of the Banī Ayyūb and their attempt at unifying the regions settled by Muslims, whereby they maintained control over these lands for nearly a century despite disputes between them. It is for this reason that Ibn Wāṣil compares them favourably with the 'bloodthirsty' Seljuks. Ibn Wāṣil underlines

[87] Muṣṭafā Jawād, 'Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb', *Majallat al-majma' al-'ilmī al-'Irāqī* 8 (Baghdad, 1961), pp. 436-408.

[88] Charis Waddy, 'An historian Looks at the Middle East: Based on the Life of Ibn Wasil, Contemporary Historian of the Ayyubid Dynasty', *Milla Wa Milla* 11 (1972), pp. 13-19.

the terror produced by the Mongol armies' advance, and subsequently he also describes the late Ayyubid efforts to restore the Sunni faith through founding mosque-based madrasas (schools). Some members of the Ayyubid family founded a considerable number of madrasas, thus shifting the centre of scholarship from Iraq to Cairo after the fall of Baghdad. In her article, Waddy finds that Ibn Wāṣil's book reflects the most important political characters of Muslim and European mediaeval history in which East and West met and intermingled, both in practice and in ideas; she notes that the terror of the Mongol advance affected both Christians and Muslims alike. Indeed, this article is strongly relevant to the current study, as it includes many important points regarding Ibn Wāṣil's historical accounts. However, Waddy's evaluation of Ibn Wāṣil does not deal with the text in adequate depth, as it is general in nature. Moreover, the study does not refer to any social or political presence of Ayyubid women.

A study of particular relevance to this enquiry is another article entitled, '*Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī, mu'arrikh al-dawla al-ayyūbiyya: ḥayātuh wa-āthāruh*' by 'Adnān Qīṭāz (1979).[89] This article is useful in that it deals with sub-topics in Ibn Wāṣil's life, such as his teachers, scientific journeys, and relationship with the German kings in Sicily. Furthermore, this article highlights the value of Ibn Wāṣil among other contemporary historians. Qīṭāz provides reasonable details about Ibn Wāṣil's compositions. The main shortcomings are that the article was written before the sixth and last volume of *Mufarrij* was published, in which the most detailed information about Ibn Wāṣil's life is found, and it is short.

[89] 'Adnān Qīṭāz, 'Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī, mu'arrikh al-dawla al-ayyūbiyya: ḥayātuh wa-āthāruh', *al-Majalla al-'arabiyya*, vol. 2, (Riyadh: Majma' al-Buḥūth al-Islāmī, 1979), pp. 108-110.

'Al-Malik Al-Mujahid, Ruler of Homs, and the Hospitallers (The Evidence in the Chronicle of Ibn Wasil)', by Balázs Major (2001)[90] is based on historical data from Ibn Wāṣil's chronicle and investigates the role of the Hospitallers in the history of the Ayyubid principality of Homs and its ruler, the king (*al-malik*) al-Mujāhid. The focus here is mostly on historical facts of military events and descriptions of battles and of rulers; furthermore, Major limits his study to the history of Homs, to the exclusion of the rest of the late Ayyubid states.

The most important recent works are by the German scholar Konrad Hirschler. His effort can be counted as a first sufficient attempt to explore Ibn Wāṣil's text. Of note is Hirschler's 2005 paper, 'Social Contexts of Medieval Arabic Historical Writing: Court Scholars Versus Ideal/Withdrawn Scholars Ibn Wāsil and Abū Šāma'.[91] As the title indicates, this study focuses on social context, excluding a detailed text analysis, wherein the author assumes the position that medieval Islamic historical texts have been previously studied mainly for their truth-value, as the source of facts and information, rather than as independent literary texts. Hirschler approaches this in a form of a comparative case study between Ibn Wāṣil and Abū Shāma. He finds that despite their similarities—they were from the same period, location, and environment—they act in different social worlds: the ideal, withdrawn scholar, distant from power holders (Abū Shāma), versus the court scholar (Ibn Wāṣil), close to those power holders. This reveals that Ibn Wāṣil had a stable, elite network in his society alongside his relationship with

[90] Balázs Major, 'Al-Malik Al-Mujahid, Ruler of Homs, and the Hospitallers (The Evidence in the Chronicle of Ibn Wasil)', in *The Crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity* ed by. Zsolt Hunyadi and Jozsef Laszlovsky (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), pp. 61-75.

[91] Konrad Hirschler, 'Social Contexts of Medieval Arabic Historical Writing: Court Scholars Versus Ideal/Withdrawn Scholars Ibn Wāsil and Abu Šāma', in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras, IV: proceedings of the 9th and 10th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 2000 and May 2001*, ed by, U. Vermeulen and J. van Steenbergen (Leuven: Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), pp. 311-331

rulers, which ensured his social survival despite changes in rulers and dynasties. This paper is also a form of a summary of Hirschler's book, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (2006), which is a published version of his PhD thesis (2003). The thesis investigates Islamic historiography in the late Ayyubid and the early Mamluk periods, in particular, the works of Ibn Wāṣil and Abū Shāma.[92] Three particular elements of Hirschler's ongoing comparison are of interest: the meaning, narrative, and social contexts. His study interprets both historians' texts through an in-depth study of the author's background in terms of family, education, and their other works, taking into account several domains: their social life, the intellectual context, and their narratives. It describes how the authors organized their materials and how they were influenced by the social context to compose their records whilst adapting the exclusion/inclusion theme. Moreover, it shows how similar texts can include the same information about certain events but have disparate meanings. Although Hirschler's study is a principal one, it does not pay adequate attention to the political aspect, to the role of the Ayyubid women, or to the issue of how a historian's knowledge influences his or her method of writing the text itself. Moreover, although Hirschler deals with Ibn Wāṣīl's text in particular, his conclusions tend to be rather generalized.

A much more recent (2014) published work by Hirschler is 'Ibn Wāṣil: An Ayyubid Perspective on Frankish Lordships and Crusades'.[93] The study is a crucial one, for two reasons: it shows Ibn Wāṣil's method in writing about the Crusaders, wherein he saw the Ayyubid model as one example (but not the only one) of the ideal ruler, and it demonstrates how Ibn Wāṣil's chronicle reflects the pluralistic landscape of Ayyubid

[92] Konrad Hirschler. *Medieval Arabic historiography: Authors as Actors* SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East. (New York: Routledge, 2006); Konrad Hirschler, 'Narrating the Past: Social Contexts and Literary Structures of Arabic Historical Writing in the Seventh/Thirteenth Century', PhD thesis, SOAS (2003).

[93] Konrad Hirschler, 'Ibn Wāṣil: an Ayyubid Perspective on Frankish Lordships and Crusades', in Alex Mallett (ed.), *Medieval Muslim historians and the Franks in the Levant* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 136-160.

politics. ‘An Ayyubid Perspective’ gives background information on Ibn Wāṣil and his close relationships to the Ayyubid court, and to what extent he was able to comment much more freely about the Ayyubid elites than were other historians such as Ibn al Jawzī or Abū Shāma. In addition, it shows Ibn Wāṣil’s ways of presenting the decentralized and pluralistic political scene of Syria during the Ayyubid period. Hirschler demonstrates the features of *Mufarrij* in detail; it also mentions another historical work of Ibn Wāṣil, *al-Ta’rīkh al-ṣāliḥī*, and compares both works. Hirschler gives an idea about Ibn Wāṣil’s journey to southern Italy in 659/1261 during the Mamluk age, and how this trip affected his outlook on the politics of the Latin Europeans. He also compares Ibn Wāṣil to other contemporary historians such as Abū Shāma and the former’s impartial attitude toward the Crusaders. The author stresses the need to provide a full translation of Ibn Wāṣil’s chronicle. Despite the fact that this study is highly relevant, it does not mention Ibn Wāṣil’s effort in documenting the history of the Ayyubid women.

Another very recent and significant study is by the Palestinian scholar Samīr Abū Muḥsin, called ‘*Khulafā’ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ‘inda Ibn Wāṣil fī kitābihi “Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb”: dirāsa ta’rīkhīya manhajīya*’ (2013).[94] This unpublished thesis focuses on the history of the Ayyubid dynasty after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s death based on Ibn Wāṣil’s report about the late Ayyubid rulers. The first chapter of Abū Muḥsin’s work introduces Ibn Wāṣil’s life and work, his teachers, and his book *Mufarrij*. The following three chapters cover the political history of the Ayyubid dynasty, of which the second chapter covers the political history of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s successors, including the conflicts among them. The third chapter is about al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr I and his role in uniting the Ayyubids after their aforementioned discord, and the fourth chapter explores the political

[94] Samīr Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-Karīm Abū Muḥsin, ‘Khulafā’ sayn ‘Abd al-Karīm Abū Muḥsins in the LevantLoutledge, 2006ven in May 2000 and May: Dirāsa Ta’rīkhīya Manhajīya’, unpublished PhD thesis, Gaza, Islamic University (2013).

history of the successors of al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr I (596-615/1200–1218). . In the fifth chapter, Abū Muḥsin’s study covers the civil history of the Ayyubid dynasty. It consists of two sections, economic administration and social civilization of the Ayyubid systems. The second section covers scientific, cultural, and military of the Ayyubid history. This study, however, does not give attention to the history of the Ayyubids after the death of al-Kāmil Muḥammad (615-635/1218-1238). Abū Muḥsin ignores this substantial period of the history of the Ayyubid, from 635/1238 to 648/1249. This marginalised era includes the conflict among the third generation of the Ayyubid house. He indicates the collapse of the Ayyubid realm in a very short passage. In Abū Muḥsin’s study, women are not taken into account at all. Even Shajar al-Durr (d. 655/1257), who is mentioned in most written historical works about the Ayyubid dynasty, receives merely a one-line mention.

The Ayyubid dynasty

The Ayyubid dynasty (see Appendix, Figures 5a, 5b, & 5c) has been a topic of interest for historians since the mid-fifteenth/twentieth century. However, many studies focus more on Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s life. In the following review, there is a presentation of the studies that deal with the whole Ayyubid era, with the late Ayyubid period, and with individual notables of the late Ayyubid period.

In studies by western orientalists, it seems that any focus on the history of the Ayyubid was a result of their interest in the history of the Crusades in the late fourteenth /early twentieth century. The key early publication in this area, *Receuil des Historiens des Croisades*, was a compilation of primary sources; it paved the way for further research

into contemporary chroniclers.[95] The Scottish orientalist Hamilton Gibb contributed with his studies about the Ayyubids in *A History of the Crusades*.[96]

In 1972 the Egyptian scholar Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr published his work *Miṣr wa-al-Shām fī 'aṣr al-Ayyūbiyyīn wa-al-Mamālīk*. The book deals with the history of the Ayyubid and Mamluks from both the political and the urban perspectives. His main focus is the conflict between the Ayyubids and the Mamluks with the Crusaders. Āshūr devoted a substantial portion to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's era, comparing it to that of the late Ayyubid dynasty. 'Āshūr's later work, *al-Ḥaraka al-ṣalībiyya* (1986), deals with the Crusade campaigns, exploring the reactions of the Muslim forces from the first Crusade in 490/1096 until these forces left Syria in 670/1272. Both studies by 'Āshūr are crucial sources in the political history of the Ayyubid house. As usual, these studies concentrate on the male Ayyubid rulers.

Broadhurst's work, *A History of the Ayyubid Sultans of Egypt* (1980)[97] is an English translation of the Arabic text *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk* by al-Maqrīzī. The translation is limited to the history of the Ayyubid rulers of Egypt (see Appendix, Figure 4a), and it includes annotations and commentary by Broadhurst.

The Israeli scholar Amalia Levanoni produced two vital studies. The first is 'The Mamluks' Ascent to Power in Egypt' (1990).[98] It is about the Mamluks' strategy in attaining the throne and discusses a crucial aspect of the late Ayyubid house: the reign of King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn (637/1240-647/1249). This article shows the factors that affected the sultan's thinking in establishing the Mamluk group, and his policy in keeping

[95] For more information see the article by Isabel Callejas Martín, 'Los ayubíes 564 h./1168-658 h./1260): un recorrido hiistoriográfico' [The Ayyubids (564/1168-658/1260): a historiographical tour], *La Espania Medieval* 38 (2015), pp.399-467.

[96] Hamilton Gibb, *A History of the Crusades*, ed by. K. M. Setton, vol. II (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1955), pp. 693-714.

[97] R. J. C. Broadhurst. *A History of the Ayyubid Sultans of Egypt* (Boston: Twayne, 1980).

[98] Amalia Levanoni, 'The Mamluks' Ascent to Power in Egypt', *Studia Islamica* 72 (1990), 121-144.

their loyalty. It measures the extent of the impact of his administration and the structure of his court in two aspects: political affairs during his life and political issues after his death. It shows how political authority transferred to the Mamluks, and what strategy they used to control Egypt after their master's death. This article does not give much detail about the role of Shajar al-Durr, the first female sultan (d. 655/1257), in paving the way for the Mamluk princes to attain power. Nevertheless, it gives important information about the era of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb.

The second study by Levanoni (2001) is 'Šağar ad-Durr: A Case of Female Sultanate in Medieval Islam'.[99] This study examines the track of Shajar al-Durr in seeking power and why her attempt remained as an episode and did not cause any change in the status of women in the political field. The study explores the factors that helped Shajar al-Durr to seek power, such as the policies of her first husband, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, who had invented a new administrative system that helped her to effectively rule Egypt. During the course of his illness and eventual death, she managed to deal with the political affairs and to have a substantial impact on the army. Levanoni's study focuses on the role of the Mamluks in appointing Shajar al-Durr as a sultana, and the reaction of the Muslims to this change in the government system. Levanoni analyses the influence of the Mamluks' background that led them to appoint a woman to head the royal court. This study is a crucial one for the research's topic, as it details a woman's attempt to access the throne. Nonetheless, the study does not cover the whole aspect of Shajar al-Durr's life; for instance, there is no discussion of the end of her life, or what her policy was behind her second husband, 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak.

[99] Amalia Levanoni, 'Šağar ad-Durr: a Case of Female Sultanate in Medieval Islam', in *Ayyubid Eras III: Proceedings of the 6th, 7th and 8th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1997, 1998, and 1999*. ed by, U. Vermeulen and J. van Steenbergen (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), pp. 209-219

In the late twentieth century, French scholars started to contribute to Ayyubid studies.[100] One useful investigation is by Anne-Marie Eddé-Terrasse (1999). Originally a PhD thesis presented in 1995, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep* (579/1183-658/1260) focuses on the history of Aleppo during the Ayyubid dynasty (see Appendix, Figure 4c) from different aspects such as politics, military, economy, and demography.[101] Notably, this thesis investigates the sovereignty of Ḍayfa Khātūn (634/1236-640/1242) as a regent of her grandson, King al-Naṣir Yūsuf II of Aleppo (633/1236-658/1260).

The Arab scholar Yasser Tabbaa published two relevant studies. *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (1997) is about architecture in Aleppo during the Ayyubid era.[102] He also contributed a chapter on Ḍayfa Khātūn to *Women, Patronage and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (2000).[103] Tabbaa is a specialist in architecture; therefore, both these studies discuss the role of women as architectural patrons. Significantly, both works shed light on the life of Ḍayfa Khātūn. The more important of these studies is the later one that deals with the role of Ḍayfa Khātūn in the built environment, for it does not ignore her political role. The author notes the position of women in the Ayyubid court. In addition, he points out the economic position of the Ayyubid women, in which they enjoyed financial independence; and refers to their philanthropic tendencies. The study analyses the factors that led to their unique situation and the respect accorded them by elites and the public, such as being free women, their political marriages, and giving birth to future kings. The book chapter gives important

[100] Martín, 'Los ayubíes', 399-467.

[101] Anne-Marie Eddé-Terrasse, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep (579/1183-658/1260)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999).

[102] Yasser Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1997).

[103] Yasser Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn, Regent Queen and Architectural Patron' in *Women, Patronage and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies,* ed by, D. Fairchild Ruggles (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 17-33.

information about the political marriage of Ḍayfa Khātūn to al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī, King of Aleppo (589-613/ 1193–1216) and about her life during her husband's reign and after his death. Finally, Tabbaa's chapter describes in detail Ḍayfa Khātūn's architectural patronage, as she focuses mainly on *khānqāh*, *ribāṭ* (Sufi retreats), and madrasas. Tabbaa's study is probably the most important study for the present thesis. The author highlights Ḍayfa Khātūn's strong presence in the Ayyubid dynasty as a queen. Although the author depends on *Muffarij* as a source about her life and career, he thinks that her actions in the contractual field were more effective than her political deeds.

Another worthwhile study is by the Egyptian scholar Taef Kamal El-Azhari: 'Ḍayfa Khatun, Ayyubid Queen of Aleppo 634-640/1236-1242' (2000). The author depends mainly on what is mentioned about Ḍayfa Khātūn in the *Mufarrij* of Ibn Wāṣil and the *Zubdat al-halab* of Ibn al-ʿAdīm. He collected the information and reorganized it in themes. His focus is on the political role of Ḍayfa Khātūn and her wise political treatment of Aleppo's alliances and enemies. El-Azhari's study is crucial to the present thesis. According to the researcher's knowledge it is the only study that concentrates on the political life of Ḍayfa Khātūn.

Since the commencement of the fifteenth/twenty-first century, some scholars have started to concentrate on the history of the late Ayyubid dynasty. Lebanese scholar Muḥammad Suhayl Ṭaqqūsh covers the history of the Ayyubid dynasty from its foundation by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in 569/1174 until its downfall in 648/1250 in his *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn fī Miṣr wa-bilād al-Shām wa-iqlīm al-Jazīra, 569-661/1174-1263* (2008).[104] Yet the study gives reasonably detailed information about the late Ayyubid rulers. In his book, Ṭaqqūsh compares the life and rule of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn with those of his successors. He

[104] Muḥammad Suhayl Ṭaqqūsh, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn fī Miṣr wa-bilād al-Shām wa-iqlīm al-Jazīra, 569-661/1174-1263* (661 H/1174-1263 (s. l.: Dār al-Nafā'is, 2008).

stresses that the political events in this period made it the most critical phase in Islamic history. Therefore, he tries to explore the political atmosphere during the late Ayyubid reign, mentioning their external relationships with other forces such as the Crusaders and the Mongols. Ṭaqqūsh divides his study into two main sections: one is totally about Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn while the other is on the late period of the dynasty. This study is a useful one, yet as other modern scholars have done, Ṭaqqūsh makes his primary focus on the Ayyubid sultans of Egypt rather than those of Syria. Moreover, he does not give much attention to the role of the Ayyubid women.

A recent useful study to consider is *al-Ayyūbīyūn ba'da Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: al-ḥamalāt al-ṣalībīya al-rābi'a, wa al-khāmisa, wa al-sādisa, wa al-sābi'a* by 'Alī Muḥammad al-Ṣallābī (2010).[105] The author focuses mainly on the history of the late Ayyūbīd dynasty. This study covers the political events after the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. It shows on one hand the external policy and the efforts of the Ayyubid sultans of Egypt such as al-'Ādil Abū Bakr I, al-Kāmil Muḥammad, and al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn against the fifth, sixth, and seventh Crusade campaigns. On the other hand, it reveals the achievement of the Ayyubids in internal policy. It also highlights the role of the *'ulamā'* (religious scholars) in the Ayyubid court. This study is an important source about those *'ulamā'* in this era as al-Ṣallābī provides essential information about their lives, their teachers, students, and works; their relationships with the elites; their attitudes toward the Ayyubid's policies; their responses to the Crusade campaigns; and their roles in the jihad against the Crusaders. Al-Ṣallābī also discusses the Ayyubid sultans' relationships with the European Christians in the east and the theological arguments between both sides. He describes the arrangements by the popes and the European kings for the Crusade campaigns, and their

[105] 'Alī Muḥammad al-Ṣallābī, *Al-Ayyūbīyūn ba'da Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: al-ḥamalāt al-ṣalībīya al-rābi'a, wa al-khāmisa, wa al-sādisa, wa al-sābi'a* (Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2010).

relationships with the Byzantine emperors. In addition, he analyses the reasons that paved the way for the fall of the Ayyubid state. Although this study is detailed about various aspects of the history of the late Ayyubid age, the author does not give any attention to the political role of women. Shajar al-Durr for instance, just takes a small paragraph of his book.

Feminist writers

It is crucial to distinguish between as "historians of women" and "feminist historians". In Cliona Murphy's view, the history of women is similar to any other sort of history. A historian of women practices with a stated goal, including "a philosophical, theoretical and historical background".[106] Aditionally, Murphy argues, women's historians insist that they are historians first and foremost, whether or not they identify as feminists, and thus their work is "more objective".[107] In contrast, feminist historians and view events through the lens of feminism, and thus write the history of women in accordance with their ideology. As Murphy observes, revisionism has demonstrated that "historians, despite their best efforts, can never completely release themselves from their own past, values or orientation."[108] Thus, events in history are erroneously attributed to a present day ideology, something that should be avoided as far as possible when interpreting the past. What is more, some male scholars of women's history view women's history as inferior, and therefore "best left to women" to write about it.[109] Because they believe that this kind of history is less important, even when they deal with

[106] Cliona Murphy, 'Women's History, Feminist History, or Gender History?' *The Irish Review*, No. 12, (Spring - Summer, 1992), 21-26, 23.

[107],Ibid..

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

the history of women, such men usually do not give it great attention: they disregard crucial questions that would add value to their work.

This research mainly deals with the history of women from the angle of historiography, and does not attempt to place it within the context of feminist history. Nonetheless, is vital to give attention to relevant feminist historians, in order to compare their approach(es) to the subject of the political position of women in history with that of Ibn Wāṣil. Scholarly interest in the political position of Muslim women in the medieval era seems to have started in the middle of the fifteenth/twentieth century.[110] The most important gender writers about women in medieval Islamic history are introduced below.

Nabia Abbot's *Two Queens of Baghdad* (1940)[111] has been translated into Arabic by 'Umar Abū al-Naṣr under the title *al-Mar'a wa al-siyāsa fī al-Islām* (2010).[112] This is the earliest book to discuss the lives of the most famous women who lived in the Abbasid era. Abbot's book examines the political influence of two women, the mother al-Khayzurān and the wife Zubayda, on the Abbasid policy during the reign of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (170-193/786-809). Her work gives a new analysis of the old historical material on the political life of women during this period. The most important feature of this book is that Abbot excellently managed to portray and analyse the nature of the relationships and conf

licts between women, both free and *jawārī* (enslaved women, concubines; sg. *jāriya*), in the *harīm* (harem) section, as they struggled to reach power.[113] This sort of

[110] Reem Al Rudainy, 'The Role of Women in the Būyid and Saljūq Periods of the Abbasid Caliphate (339-447/950-1055 & 447-547/1055-1152): the Case of Iraq', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter (2014).

[111] Nabia Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad* (London: Saqi, 1986).

[112] Nabia Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa al-siyāsa fī al-Islām ma'a dirāsat namūdhajīn min al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī: al-Khaizurān Umm al-Rashīd wa Zubaida zawjatahu,* trans by, 'Umar Abū al-Naṣr (Paris: Dār Byblion, 2010).

[113] The *ḥarīm* section of the palace is the largest part and includes the ruler's wives , children, servants, and concubines. No man was allowed to enter the ḥarīm without eunuchs in attendance. The segretation of men

conflict happens repeatedly in the palaces of rulers at any time and place, and the caliph and the women of his court were no exception. Abbott's insightful discussion could help understanding the life of the *jawārī* and the princesses and other noblewomen in the Ayyubid palaces.

Egyptian scholar Leila Ahmed's book *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992) is a general historical view of women in Islam.[114] She uses a contemporary gender studies approach in her analysis to give a new aspect to the issues that she deals with in the book. Ahmed examines the position of women from the early Islamic period and asserts that Muslim women were in a better situation then than they are today. The main argument is the strong desire of men to control women, especially in the later Islamic eras. Ahmed focuses on the position of women during the rise of Islam and in the Abbasid, Umayyad, Mamluk, and Ottoman empires. She does not mention the Ayyubids, not even the renowned Sultana Shajar al-Durr.

Moroccan feminist writer Fatima Mernissi studied the political situation of women in Islam in her book *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (2003), which has been translated into Arabic by Fāṭima al-Zahrā' Azruwīl under the name *Sulṭānāt Mansīyāt* (2010). The main focus of this book seems to be an investigation of why and how these queens came to power, along with the general question of why the idea of women in politics is so alien in Islam. Mernissi argues that the conflict between Muslim women and tradition in Muslim society prevented them from attaining political positions as easily as men did. She analyses the lives of the *jawārī* and of the queens, their roles, and their influence on their societies. The book gives useful detail about the lives of the *jawārī* inside the

from women is not unique to Muslim society, it was also practiced in other societies, such as the Byzantine Empire. See Mājid, *Ta'rīkh al-ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya fī al-'uṣūr al-wusṭā*, (Cairo: Maktabat Angelo al-Miṣrīya, 2010) , pp. 125-126; Marshall, G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), vol. 1, vol. 2, pp. 140, 143.

[114] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven; London: Yale U.P., 1992).

caliphs' palaces. She also mentions Shajar al-Durr and how she was treated badly by the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. Mernissi rushes enthusiastically to portray Shajar al-Durr as a hero, ignoring the factors that facilitated her ascension to the throne, namely, her husband Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn and the Mamluks.

The aforementioned woman advocates agree on some points, and they share a significant enthusiasm in defence of women's rights; however, their studies are of limited use to this thesis, as none of these scholars have looked at the Ayyubid women in depth. Generally, they just use the available historical facts to support their ideas about women; they focus on the Muslim females who are already fairly well known because those feminist intellectuals are not specialists in history. The main argument of some of those writers is found in two aspects: (1) highlighting the difference between the theoretical position of women according to the laws of Islam and their practical situation in the living Islamic community and (2) investigating the factors that contribute to changes in the position of women over time and in various Islamic states and societies.

Research Project

The above survey reviews a collection of representative materials related to the current study. This thesis will identify several important points that have not been previously highlighted by studies focused on in-depth investigation of matters pertaining to Ibn Wāṣīl and his historical writings. Most importantly, there is an apparent gap in knowledge in terms of published academic research that has examined Ibn Wāṣīl's historical narrations in depth and/or that has claimed to cover most aspects with respect to certain salient topics, especially his attitude toward elite women. Therefore, this research seeks to conduct an original study on the subject that would bridge this gap. The only studies that deal with Ibn Wāṣil's text *Mufarij al-kurūb* were done by Hirschler, particularly in his book *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors*, but the focus

of his work is completely different from that of the present research, since Hirschler's work concentrates primarily on social relationships and, as mentioned earlier, it does not take women's political influence into account, nor does it investigate in any detail the influence of the historian's knowledge on his writing.

There is another gap in feminist studies about Muslim women in the medieval Islamic era. Most of the studies are about the role of women in the early Islamic, the Abbasid, Seljuqs periods. This present study will try to fill the gap of the political history of women by highlighting the function of the Ayyubid women, relying on contemporary or near-contemporary Islamic historical works. This thesis will further examine how Ibn Wāṣil depicted the efforts of women regents in the late Ayyubid dynasty to utilize their political courts in order to manifest and maximize their power. In this regard, the research shall highlight ways in which Ibn Wāṣil narrated conflict among the Ayyubids and how these women dealt with it. The study will also attempt to identify the place of the Ayyubid females among their male peers, and the extent of their success or failure compared to male Ayyubid rulers. It is also vital to underline the historical precedents that occurred during the period in question because, for the first time in the history of the Islamic polity, women were given an opportunity to become political leaders. Therefore, it is important to examine how this "revolutionary" development was narrated by Ibn Wāṣil, and at the same time, the research will evaluate his attitude toward this matter.

To reach the objectives stated above, the research will attempt to pose a number of key questions to be answered through an analysis of the text. Each chapter of this research will focus on different aspects of the questions, but the prime research question is how Ibn Wāṣil describes and evaluates the political role of women in late Ayyubid period, and what affected his judgement, whilst the following research questions will be considered subsidiary and complementary:

- Why does Ibn Wāṣil admire the political efficiency of the women in the late Ayyubid house?
- What are the determining factors that govern Ibn Wāṣil's representation of Ayyubid women's power?
- How did Ibn Wāṣil position himself and his work in relation to the court and courtly power?
- How did Ibn Wāṣil's connections to statesmen further his inside knowledge of political affairs?
- What was the impact of Ibn Wāṣil's multi-faceted education on his writing about women?
    - Since he had spent much of his life travelling in the Mediterranean and the Arab world, how did this factor influence his writing about women?
- How much did Ibn Wāṣil's time and place in the Ayyubid court govern his judgements regarding women? Was the institution of hijab or the ḥarīm a drawback preventing him from writing about them? How did he manage to deal with that?
- How did his proximity to some leading Ayyubid personalities distinguish him from other cotemporary historians? What distinguishes Ibn Wāṣil's and other historians' accounts from books written about Ayyubid women?
- How does Ibn Wāṣil evaluate the role of jawārī in the Ayyubid policy? And why?
- Why does Ibn Wāṣil acknowledge the Ayyubid regent women more than the sultana Shajar al-Durr?

Research Structure

The present study is divided into five chapters. It is designed to answer the research questions mentioned earlier. Three of the chapters examine how the historian presents his theme, together with the intended message behind his writings concerning this theme. Each chapter is further subdivided to reflect the manner in which Ibn Wāṣil depicted the selected themes. The Introduction (Chapter One) includes the historical background of Islamic historiography during the Ayyubid age, a review of the literature, and the research methodology. Chapter Two addresses Ibn Wāṣil and his world. This is to give a picture of Ibn Wāṣil's worldview, writing style, and understanding of political affairs: especially to what extent, in his view, women were allowed to 'interfere' in the political field. This chapter is divided into five sections: the first section examines the author's life and background; the second section shows the content and the value of *Mufarrij*. The third section highlights the author's aim in writing *Mufarrij*, the significance of the title of the book, and how this affects the historian's point of view about the political roles of Muslim women. The fourth section explores the political background of the late Ayyubid dynasty, while the fifth and final section of Chapter Two analyses Ayyubid honorifics and titles, in an attempt to uncover the nature of the relationships among them and how this influenced the political roles of women. This chapter will help to deduce the factors that influenced Ibn Wāṣil's judgement about the political role of Ayyubid women.

Chapter Three discusses the first political role of women in Islamic history, that of queen, from Ibn Wāṣil's point of view: that is, when women sought the throne via the *jawārī* class system. This chapter is divided into six sections. First, the *jawārī* position in Islamic society according to Ibn Wāṣil's understanding, and second, the image of the *jawārī* in Islamic texts in comparison to their image in *Mufarrij*. The third section

discusses the political activities of the *jawārī* during different Islamic eras, and Ibn Wāṣil's perspective on their role in the Ayyubid period. The fourth, fifth, and sixths sections present Shajar al-Durr as a case study of a *jāriya* who managed to rise to power as a queen. Sections five and six deal with her life during her husband Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's lifetime, the portrayal of Shajar al-Durr in Ibn Wāṣil's text, his attitude toward her authority in internal and external policy, and his judgment of her political ability compared with the male rulers of the late Ayyubid period. This chapter shows what his assessment is and why that differs from that of other contemporary and near-contemporary historians.

Chapter Four explores the second political role of women according to Ibn Wāṣil: that is, as a regent. This chapter is divided into five parts: First, the position of regent in medieval Islamic history, the model of the female regent in Islamic history, and the regency system according to Ibn Wāṣil understands. The second and third sections deal with the Ayyubid princesses Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāziyya Khātūn (638-655/1240-1257), respectively, as regents based on Ibn Wāṣil's presentation. Both sections investigate his estimation about their political roles from their early life until they came to power. These two sections discuss the differences, according to him, between the two princesses in terms of their ways of dealing with political affairs. The fourth section examines Ibn Wāṣil's belief about the extent of influence of a regent mother on a young king. The fifth section is a comparison between Ibn Wāṣil's assessments of Ḍayfa Khātūn, Ghāziyya Khātun, and Shajar al-Durr. The aim of this chapter is to tease out Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation of the political role of regent-mother and why he thinks that the role of the regent is the better function for women in politics.

Eventually, the conclusion will restate the answer for the questions that are posed in each chapter, and it will summarize the response to each question. More specifically, it will concentrate on the main questions of the thesis: how Ibn Wāṣil portrays and assesses the political role of women in late Ayyubid period, and what factors influenced him and affected his evaluation. It will highlight the importance of reading the historical text in a critical way regarding any issue, but especially concerning women: focusing on the historian's meaning between the lines in order to extract the inner meaning of the text.

Research Methodology

Ibn Khaldūn (d.732/1332) was a well-known Muslim historian, thinker, statesman, and social philosopher from North Africa who lived during the eighth/ fourteenth century.[115] He had his own philosophy in writing history. He thinks that the former chroniclers do not make enough effort to seek the truth in writing history. He points out that writing history is not easy; it is complicated by nuance and qualitative issues. Therefore, he suggests that the historian should inspect each fact, no matter how seemingly insignificant, and examine these closely and thoroughly to reach the deeper causes of historical episodes.[116] He believes that historians are required to be highly knowledgeable about their topics, precise in their observations, and carefully contrast what is apparent with what is below the surface of the text. Without such skills, a historian would be ineffective. He believes that falsehoods are introduced into historical records for a number of reasons, such as sectarianism, overconfidence in the sources, being unaware of hidden agendas, or the desire to curry favour with those in power.

[115] Muḥammad ʻAbd Allāh Inān, *Ibn Khaldūn: ḥayātuhu wa-turāthuhu al-fikrī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʻat Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya bi-al-Qāhira, 1933). p. 17; Maaike van Berkel, 'Ibn Khaldun, a Critical Historian at Work. The *Muqaddima* on Secretaries and Secretarial Writing', in *O ye Gentlemen, Arabic Studies on Sciences and Literary Culture*, eds. by Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan P. Hogendijk (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 248- 261 (p. 248). For more information about the life of Ibn Khaldūn, see Inān*, Ibn Khaldūn*.

[116] Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 19; Imadaldin Al-Jubouri, 'Ibn Khaldun and the Philosophy of History', *Philosophy Now* 50 (March/April 2005), pp 18-19 (p. 18); Van Berkel, 'Ibn Khaldun', p. 255.

Moreover, some historians, scribes, and narrators are not scrupulous in examining their materials. As a result, they commit errors because they accept false reports or narrations of events that never actually happened.[117]Ibn Khaldūn suggests his own method in writing history based on theoretical techniques. He uses scientific critique to test statements of historical events, the origins of these reports, and the methods employed by historians. He suggests that the historian should follow four main methods to be able to write a true historical record. These approaches are criticism; observation, comparison, and examination.

Based on the former suggestion by Ibn khaldūn, this study aims to reassess the work of Ibn Wāṣil by contextualizing the text in its contemporary social, cultural, and intellectual environments. Searching for the deep meaning of the historical account will be facilitated by following the four approaches outlined by Ibn Khaldūn. Therefore, these methods will be applied in the study of the text of *Mufarrij*.

What is more, Ḥasan ʻUthmān in his book *Manhaj al-baḥth al-taʻrīkhī* believes that analysing the historical text is an essential phase of writing history by modern researchers. He explains the steps to be taken into account in analysing the historical text, as mentioned before.[118] The first step is to analyse the content of the historical text in order to explore the external meaning of the text. This includes searching about the meaning of terms and turns of phrase in the historian's vocabulary, and about the early historian's intention in his writing, in order to understand what he means to express in his text. This step depends mainly on studying the language of the historian, finding out the meaning of his words, terms, style, and understanding the chronicler's language as it was spoken and written during his time. This operation will help to minimize mistakes in

[117] Al-Jubouri, 'Ibn Khaldun and the Philosophy of History', 19; van Berkel, 'Ibn Khaldun', p. 255.

[118] ʻUthmān, *Manhaj al-baḥth,* p. 117.

understanding the text and to uncover the internal meaning.[119] It will also provide the modern researcher with an awareness of the level of the chronicler's knowledge and the way he construed the political facts when he reported them. [120]

An analysis of the author's language in which an effort is made to extract not only the explicit, but more importantly the implicit, message behind the historian's use of a specific lexicon reveals the way in which he employs implied meanings in response to the Ayyubid women rulers' activities. This method of closely examining the text is of particular importance given that in the last part of Ibn Wāṣil's record, there is a supplement that was written by Ibn Wāṣil's student, ʻAlī bin ʻAbd al-Raḥīm.[121] Hence, a thorough analysis of the text might help to determine which part was written by Ibn Wāṣil, since the language he employed leans more towards a scholarly style, whereas the sections written by his student are more ornamental in their language.[122] Moreover, on occasion, Ibn Wāṣil's student used a vernacular vocabulary. In addition, comparison between Ibn Wāṣil's language in evaluating the political achievements of women and his language about their contemporary male peers may expose his attitude regarding the contribution of woman in Ayyubid history. Additionally, to understand the medieval Arabic found in the terms and expressions of *Mufarrij*, the researcher depended on *al-Bāḥith al-ʻarabī*.[123] This online compendium includes the major Arabic language dictionaries and etymological reference works, such as *Lisān al-ʻArab* by Muḥammad bin Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Maqāyīs al-lugha* by Aḥmad Ibn Fāris, *al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ fī al-lugha* by al-Jawharī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīt* by Muḥammad bin Yaʻqūb Fīrūzābādī, and *al-ʻUbāb al-*

[119] ʻUthmān, *Manhaj al-baḥth*, pp. 119-120.

[120]Ibid, p.122.

[121] See Chapter Two, '*Mufarrij*'s structure and style'.

[122] As was the case with the *kuttāb*'s writing style in Islamic historiography during the medieval age: see Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 177.

[123] Rā'id Naʻīm, *al-Bāḥith al-ʻarabī* (Munich).<http://baheth.info> (last accessed 02 August 2018).

zākhir by al-Ḥasan bin Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī. By referring to multiple definitions and etymologies, the meanings of obscure and obsolete words and phrases can be confirmed. Other important sources are *Mu'jam al-muṣṭalaḥāt wa-al-alqāb al-ta'rīkhīya* by Muṣṭafá Abd al-Karīm Khaṭīb and. *Mu'jam muṣṭalaḥāt al-ta'rīkh wa-al-ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya* by Anwar Maḥmūd Zanātī.[124]

The second phase, according to 'Uthmān's approach, is to deal with the internal meaning of the historical text. It concentrates on analysing the circumstances that would have accompanied the writing of the historical text. This phase leads the researcher to assess to what extent the early historian's account was accurate in transmitting the news, and how true that report was. This can be done by examining each historical fact and piece of news individually, in as much depth as possible.[125] This step involves several aspects. Studying the historian's personality is essential, as the value of the news that he reports is linked with his socioeconomic status and his professional position.[126] Another crucial point is to pinpoint the time frame in which the text was written. This will help in establishing whether the historian was witness to the historical facts or simply depended on hearsay or any other sources.[127] Also, it is useful to know whether the early historian habitually recorded events in the same place where they happened, or took the information from other sources.[128]

[124] Muṣṭafá Abd al-Karīm Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam al-muṣṭalaḥāt wa-al-alqāb al-ta'rīkhīya* (Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1996) Anwar Maḥmūd Zanātī, *Mu'jam muṣṭalaḥāt al-ta'rīkh wa-al-hy durin al-islāmīya* ('Ammān: Dār Zahrān lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2011).

[125] 'Uthmān, *Manhaj al-baḥth*, pp. 124-125.

[126] Ibid, pp. 89-90; Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A case study in Perso-Islamicate historiography* (Columbus: Ohio State U. P., 1980), pp. 7-8.

[127] Ibid, p. 103

[128] Ibid, p. 104.

To apply this to the subject of the Ayyubid political women, this thesis attempts to assess to what extent Ibn Wāṣil follows the scientific method in writing about Ayyubid women. Therefore, some attention must be paid to Ibn Wāṣil's life and career; to begin with, using Ibn Khaldūn's four aspects to examine *Mufarrij* from diverse angles, such as how Ibn Wāṣil's position, education, and social connections determined his relationship with the late Ayyubid authorities. This is achieved by examining the relevant elements of the author's sociocultural milieu, assessing the sources on which he relied, and providing a better understanding of the ideological background from which he approached his historical narratives.

Waldman emphaszies that it is difficult for modern scholars to understand the real intentions of previous writers of history. Her claim is based on the distance in time and space between the historian and the modern reader. She notes that some factors can have a high impact on the historical text, such as the chronicler's era and intellectual milieu.[129] Sometimes the researcher cannot reach any specific conclusion about facts in the text because there is no precise clue that can help in analysing the text. Therefore, the will give more interpretations of it using the probability words.

In order to understand the factors that influenced Ibn Wāṣil's narrative, it is crucial to study the political circumstances that prevailed during the author's lifetime and to determine the extent to which these events influenced him. This will allow the researcher to deduce whether or not Ibn Wāṣil was affected by public perception and subsequently made a conscious effort to satisfy the public's sentiment. Such an approach also helps to examine the author's notion of history.

[129] Waldman, *Toward a theory of historical narrative*, p. 8.

One of the most important factors that should be taken into account by the modern researcher based on 'Uthmān's approach is to investigate the contradiction among the historical texts about a single fact, as this could reveal some new facts about the text itself. It could show how careful the contemporary historian was in writing his history. What are the factors that influenced him in choosing his method of presenting his account? [130] Waldman stresses that the researcher should be "familiar with all the styles of writing relevant to the particular work he is studying and that he understand the stage represented by that work in the development of its genre".[131] This target can be reached by careful examination of various historical writings from the same period. It is expected that this will serve as an effective way of reassessing Ibn Wāṣil's work. In this regard, the main focus is on matters such as the kinds of sources on which Ibn Wāṣil depended and the ways in which his perception of a particular woman or an event differs from that of other contemporary or near-contemporary historians. The following paragraphs discuss several noted historians who write about the Ayyubid house.

Court historians

Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256)

Shams al-Dīn Abī al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf bin Qizughlī was the grandson of the well-known scholar Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200). Born in Baghdad in 581/1185, he received his early education in his hometown under his grandfather's supervision. He then moved to Mosul, after which he spent the rest of his life in Damascus.[132] There he became a famous

[130] 'Uthmān, *Manhaj al-baḥth,* p. 124.

[131] Waldman, *Toward a theory of historical narrative*, pp.14-15.

[132] Khayr al-Dīn Ziriklī, *al-A'lām: qāmūs tarājim li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-al-nisā' min al-'Arab wa-al-musta'ribīn wa-al-mustashriqīn,* 15th edn (Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2002) p. 222; Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, p. 32; Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 2, p. 261.

preacher, earning high respect from the Ayyubid elites and '*ulamā'*.[133] He authored several books in different fields, the most important of which is *Mir'āt al-zamān fī ta'rīkh al-'ayān,* a universal chronicle. It is one of the largest monographs in the field of history, as it is about forty volumes.[134] *Mir'āt al-zamān* covers the period from the creation until (close to) the death of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī.[135] Mūsā Ibn Muḥammad Al-Yūnīnī (d.726/1326) wrote a summary of *Mir'āt al-zamān* called *Dhayl Mir'āt al-zamān*, However, his book is not as historically valuable as *Mir'āt al-zamān*.[136] Ibn al-Jawzī is often criticized by other early Muslim intellectuals due to the fact that he switched from the Ḥanbalī to the Ḥanafī school of thought.[137] Even modern scholars such as Mallett have some negative comments about *Mir'āt al-zamān*. They find the book to be poorly structured, confounding in some ways, and far from an ideal piece of historical writing.[138] Ibn al-Jawzī does not give much attention to reporting the late Ayyubid rulers' history. Instead, he focuses on writing about the elites in his own times, such as scholars and statesmen. In other words, he deviated from his basic goal of writing history, so that his book turned into more of an encyclopaedia of that era's elites. Indeed, in his introduction he mentions that the aim of writing his book is to "provide wisdom".[139]

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[133]. Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, p. 32; Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 2, p. 261.

[134] In the eighth/fourteenth century an abridged version (reduced to about twenty volumes) of the massive history of Ibn al-Jawzī was produced, edited by al-Yūnīnī; Alex Mallett, 'Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī', in Alex Mallett (ed.), *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 84-108 (pp. 92 & 96); Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, p. 32; Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 2, p. 261.

[135] Mallett, 'Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī', p. 94.

[136] Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-'arabī*, vol. 2, p. 262.

[137] Ibid, p. 261.

[138] Mallett, 'Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī', p. 95.

[139] Shams al-Dīn Abī al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf Ibn Qizughlī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī tā'rīkh al-'ayān*, Muḥammad Barakāt, Kāmil al-Kharrat, 'Ammār Rīḥāwī, Razān Faḥḥām, Zayna el-'Awwā, Rashā al-Makārī, and Randa al-'Asalī (eds.), 23 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla al-'Ālamīya, 2013),vol. 1, p. 5; Mallett, 'Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī', p. 94.

The foregoing criticisms do not decrease the merit of the information in the book, however, especially regarding the late Ayyubid history. The value of the book for this thesis can be found in two periods: first, in Ibn al-Jawzī's depiction of the events in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, for he depended in his report on some crucial sources that have since disappeared; second, in his portrayal of the incidents of the seventh/thirteenth century during his lifetime as an eyewitness. The book also can be counted as one of the most famous sources of the history of Syria at that time.[140]

Ibn al-'Adīm (d. 660/1262)

Kamāl al-Dīn 'Umar bin Aḥmad Ibn Abī Jarādh Ibn al-'Adīm can be counted as the most important historian in Aleppo in the seventh/thirteenth century. His family was from Iraq, but Ibn al-'Adīm was born and grew up in Aleppo. His family occupied judiciary and other high-ranking posts of state.[141] He was close to the Ayyubid elites in the reigns of King al-'Azīz Muḥammad (612-633/1216-1236) and his son al-Nāṣir. During the regency era of Ḍayfh Khātūn, Ibn al-'Adīm was appointed to diplomatic missions in Iraq and Egypt.[142] In terms of his career, he was a talented poet and a Ḥanafī judge, and he became a teacher at a *madrasa* (school) in 620/1220.[143] He authored works in different fields, some of which have disappeared.[144] Ibn al-'Adīm has two famous books, a biographical compendium about Aleppo's elites called *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī*

[140] Mallett, 'Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī', pp. 39- 94.

[141] David Morry, '*Egypt and Aleppo in Ibn al-'Adīm's Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab', in The Historiography of Islamic Egypt c. 950 – 1800,* ed by. Hugh N. Kennedy (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 13; Sāmī al-Dahhān, *Ḥayāt Ibn al-'Adīm wa-Āthāruh* [n.s.] (Damascus, 1951), p. 20.

[142]Alex Mallett, 'Islamic Historians of the Ayyubid era', p. 244; Sami Dahan, 'The Local Histories of Syria', p. 111.

[143] Alex Mallett, 'Islamic Historians of the Ayyubid era', p. 244; Sami Dahan, 'The Local Histories of Syria', pp. 111-112.

[144] David Morry, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World: Ibn al-'Adīm and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the City* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 1.

ta'rīkh Ḥalab and a short history entitled *Zubdat al-ḥalab min ta'rīkh Ḥalab*.[145] The latter deals with Aleppo's history during the Ayyubid era until the historian's death in 660/1262.[146] It is a chronicle based on the material that was collected from the biographical work. It is also as an important source about the history of Aleppo and northern Syria at that time, as it gives detailed information about what the author saw and experienced in the political field during his life. Moreover, it includes facts that cannot be found in other historical works.[147] *Zubdat al-ḥalab* is the most important source about the life of Ḍayfa Khātūn because Ibn al-ʻAdīm was an eyewitness to the events, as will be shown later.

Abū al-Fidā' (d. 732/ 1331)

Al-Mu'ayyad Abū al-Fidā' Ismāʻīl ibn ʻAlī ibn Muḥamūd ibn Ibn Ayyūb was an Ayyubid royal: his father was the king of Hama. He left Hama with his family after the Mongol attack to settle in Damascus, where the historian was born (672/1273) and grew up.[148] When he became an adult he moved to and settled in Egypt during the reign of the sultan al-Nāṣir ibn Qalāwūn (693-694/1293-1294), (698-708/1294-1309), (709-741/1309-1341); there he had an excellent relationship with the sultan.[149] The sultan appointed him king of Hama and favoured the historian among other kings. Due to the fact that Abū al-Fidā' was trained in history, astronomy, geography, philosophy, medicine, and botany, he gave special care to the *'ulamā'* of his time.[150] His famous history is *al-Mukhtaṣar fī*

[145] Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, p. 28; David Morry, 'Egypt and Aleppo in Ibn al-ʻAdīm's Bughyat', p. 13.

[146]David Morry, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 2; Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, p. 28; Kamāl al-Dīn ʻUmar bin Aḥmad Ibn Abī Jarādh Ibn al-ʻAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab min ta'rīkh Ḥalab*, ed by. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 1996).

[147] Sami Dahan, 'The Local histories of Syria', p.113.

[148] al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʻlām*, vol. 1, p. 319.

[149] Ibid, p. 319.

[150] Bāqir Amīn al-Ward , *Muʻjam al-ʻulamā' al-ʻArab*, 2 vols. (Beirut: ʻĀlam al-Kutub, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-ʻArabīya, 1986), vol. 1, p. 69.

akhbār al-bashar: a concise history from the time of Adam and Eve up to the historian's own times.[151] Abū al-Fidā' was a student of Ibn Wāṣil.[152] When one compares *Mufarrij* with *al-Mukhtaṣar* in their treatment of the history of the Ayyubids, it is clear that Abū al-Fidā' depended on *Mufarrij* as one of his sources. However, the pupil is not like his teacher in his approach to the history of the Ayyubid women, as is discussed later in this thesis.

Al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333)

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī was a well-known Egyptian historian and civil servant who lived in the eighteenth/fourteenth century.[153] He wrote an encyclopaedic book in thirty-one volumes entitled *Nihāyat al-Arab fī funūn al-adab*. The book includes various subjects such as geography, astronomy, meteorology, chronology, geology, and history.[154] The history of Egypt and Syria during the Mamluk period is the most vital part of his history as it contains details regarding the history of the Ayyubid house.[155] What distinguishes al-Nuwayrī's narration about the Ayyubid women is the letter written by al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn to his son, which was given to King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh (648/1250) by his stepmother, Shajar al-Durr. This letter has been a topic of debate about among modern scholars, as will be explained in Chapter Three.

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[151] See Ismā'īl ibn 'Alī Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*, 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥisaniya al-Maṣriya, 1907).

[152] Tadmurī , 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 32.

[153] Elias Muhanna, 'Encyclopaedism in the Mamluk period: the composition of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī's (d. 1333) *Nihāyat al-'Arab fī funūn al-adab*', (unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2012), p.1; 'History of encyclopaedias', *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* < https://www.britannica.com/topic/encyclopaedia/History-of-encyclopaedias#ref307726 > [accessed 15 July 2018].

[154] Muhanna, 'Encyclopaedism in the Mamluk period', p. 1.

[155] Muhanna, 'Encyclopaedism in the Mamluk period', p. 1.; Mahmood Ibrahim, 'The 727/1327 Silk Weavers' Rebellion in Alexandria: Religious Xenophobia, Homophobia, or Economic Grievances', *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 16 (University of Chicago, 2012), pp.123-142 (p. 123)

Al-Maqrīzī (766-845/1365-1441)

Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-ʻAbbās Aḥmad bin ʻAlī al-Maqrīzī was born and grew up in Cairo. He was an erudite scholar as well as a poet, judge, and teacher, yet he was perhaps most well known as a historian.[156] He came from a family of scholars. His grandfather was a specialist in Hadith and his father was a statesman, serving as a judge and in the chancery (*dīwān al-inshā'*).[157] They adhered to the Ḥanbalī school, but al-Maqrīzī was in his early life a follower of the Ḥanafī school, and when he was twenty he switched to the Shafiʻī school.[158] He studied under about six hundred different teachers, and authored nearly two hundred books.[159] He had a good relationship with the Mamluk kings, Barqūq (784-791/1382-1391 and 792-801/1392-1399) and his son al-Nāṣir Faraj (801-815/1399-1405). Similarly to Abū Shāma and Ibn Kathīr, he was not happy about the policy of the Mamluk dynasty. Therefore, he stopped holding any official position after around 820/1417 and instead focused more on writing history.[160] Al-Maqrīzī's most famous historical work is *al-Sulūk fī maʻarifat duwal al-mulūk*. The book deals with the history of the Ayyubid and Mamluk in Egypt from 577/1181 to 840/1436.[161] In writing about the early part of this period he relies on some valuable earlier historians such as Ibn Wāṣil and Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, and when writing about his own era he adds his first-hand observations.[162] For the early period of the history of the Ayyubids in his book, al-

[156] Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab historians of the Crusades*, p. 34; Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʻ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʻ*, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayā, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 22.

[157] al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʻ*,vol. 2, p. 21; Wan Kamal Mujani, 'The Mamluk historians and their accounts on the economy of Egypt for the period of 872-922 H/1468-1517 AD', *Journal of History and Social Sciences*, 1/2 (July–December 2010), pp. 44-66 (pp. 45-46).

[158] al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʻ*, vol. 2, p. 22; Frédéric Bauden, 'al-Maqrīzī', in Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2010), pp. 1074–1076 (p. 1074).

[159] al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʻ*, vol. 2, p. 23.

[160] Mujani, 'The Mamluk Historians', 46.

[161] Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, p. 34.

Maqrīzī depended on very substantial sources, which have since disappeared, about the history of Egypt; unfortunately he does not indicate these sources. Additionally, he pays attention to Shajar al-Durr; he had a specific attitude toward her, as will be shown in Chapter Three. Comparing to other near contemporary historians he pays reasonable attention to the Ayyubid women regent.

Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 874/1469)

Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Abū al-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrībirdī was born and died in Cairo.[163] His father was a military officer and a Mamluk atabeg. Although Ibn Taghrībirdī was orphaned after his father's death when he was three years old, his elite status was not affected. He lived with his sister, whose husband was Jalāl al-Dīn al-Balqīnī, one of the famous *'ulamā'* at that time. Under his brother-in-law's care he must have received a sound education, for he became knowledgeable in several diverse fields. In addition to history, he was a specialist in *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, music, equestrianism, grammar, and astronomy.[164] Ibn Taghrībirdī studied with some famous scholars such as the historian al-Maqrīzī.[165] He compiled several important books, yet his passion was for history.[166] The most famous of his works is *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira*, a chronicle that can be described as an encyclopaedia limited to Egyptian history.[167] The book spans the eight centuries from the year 40/660 to the death of Ibn Taghrībirdī in 857/1453, and covers the reigns of all the sultans and kings who ruled Egypt throughout different

[162] Ibid; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, vol. 2, p. 24.

[163] Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, vol. 8, p. 222; Mujani, 'The Mamluk Historians', 45.

[164] Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, vol. 8, p. 222; Mujani, 'The Mamluk Historians', 52.

[165] al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, vol. 10, p. 306.

[166] Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Abū al-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira*, 16 vols (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963-71), vol. 1, pp. 10-17.

[167] Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, p. 26; Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, vol. 8, p. 223; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 1, , pp. 10-11.

Islamic eras.[168] Interestingly, Ibn Taghrībirdī tends to report any historical event from various earlier historians, referring to their names; this has been of help in obtaining information from crucial disappeared early sources about the late Ayyubid period. This is the case with what he has recorded about Shajar al-Durr.

Professional historians (ʻulamāʼ)

Abū Shāma (d. 665/1268)

Shihāb al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ismāʿīl Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn ʿUthmān Ibn Abī Bakr al-Maqdisī was born in Damascus.[169] He was an expert in theology and linguistic subjects.[170] One of the most important points about Abū Shāma is that he had no connection with the Ayyubid rulers. He spent his life among the *ʻulamāʼ* class.[171] He lived and died in Damascus, leaving it only four times, two of them for pilgrimage to Mecca. He was best known for his histories *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn al-nūriyya wa-l-ṣalāḥiyya*.[172] The book has a significant historical value as one of the famous medieval historical sources about Nūr al-Dīn Zangī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Due to his admiration for them; he limited the scope of the book to these two sultans. His aim in writing the book was to show examples of ideal rulers.[173] Later, he added his sequel, *al-Dhayl ʻalā al-Rawḍatayn* to cover the history of the rest of the Ayyubid era. Comparing *al-Rawḍatayn* with *al-Dhayl*, the latter is less important for two reasons: one, because much of the text is taken up with the biographies of the prominent *ʻulamāʼ* of his age, and

[168] al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʼ al-lāmiʻ*, vol. 10, p. 306; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 1, p. 3.

[169] M. H. M Ahmed, 'Studies on the Work of Abu Shama 599-665 A.H (1203-1267)', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London (1951), p. 1.

[170] Ibid, p. 56.

[171] For more information, see Ahmed, 'Studies on the Work of Abu Shama', pp. 63-65.

[172] Zayde G. Antrim, 'Abū Shāma Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqdisī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), vol. 3. <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/abu-shama-shihab-al-din-al-maqdisi-COM_22839> [accessed 2 July 2018]

[173] Ahmed, 'Studies on the work of Abu Shama', p. 96; Hirschler, 'Narrating the Past', p. 168.

two, because he ignores some crucial events.[174] As will be shown in the next chapters, the difference between Abū Shāma and Ibn Wāṣil appears in their works: the former was a traditional religionist, whilst the latter was mainly concerned with rational science. What they have in common is that each one was influenced by his intellectual upbringing, training, and surroundings.[175]

Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372)

Ismā'īl bin'Umar Ibn Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Busrawī was a Shāfi'ī scholar. His father died when he was young, so he grew up in the care of his oldest brother in Damascus.[176] He is well known for his works in history, the *hadīth*, linguistics, and *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis).[177] He produced several books, mainly in the religious field, one of the most important of which is *Tafsīr al-Quran* in four volumes.[178] His most famous work in history is entitled *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*.[179] He mentions in that book that his main aim is to narrate the history of the world from the beginning of creation, through the early life of humans starting with Adam and Eve, then the prophets, and the history of the Islamic dynasties, until the era of the historian himself. He ends the book with some descriptions of heaven and hell. As Ibn Kathīr was a specialist in *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* his history book seems to naturally take on a religious tone. His unstated aim is apparently to provide

[174] Ahmad, 'Studies on the Work of Abu Shama', p. 116; Hirschler, 'Narrating the Past', p. 77.

[175] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 19. ; Ahmad, 'Studies on the Work of Abu Shama', p. 58.

[176] Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī a'yān al-mi'a al-thāmina*, ed. by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd , 2nd edn, 6 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmānīya,1972). vol. 1, p. 374; Ibn al-'Imād al-Imām Shihāb al-Dīn Abī al-Falāh al-'Akarī al-Ḥanbalī al-Dimashqī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, eds. Maḥmūd Arnā'ūṭ and 'Abd al-Qādir Arnā'ūṭ, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), vol. 1, p. 68.

[177] Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Kinānī ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'al-ghumr bi-abnā'al-'umr*, ed. by Ḥasan Ḥabashī, 4 vols. (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'lā lil-Shu'ūn al-Islāmīya, Lajnat Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1969) , vol. 1, p. 39.

[178] al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. 1, p. 68.

[179] al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. 1, p. 68 ; al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, vol. 1, p. 374.

wisdom and advice, warning people in his era and reminding them that judgment day is coming by describing the signs of that day at the end of his book. It is expected that Ibn Kathīr, who describes his period as the "age of sedition", accounts for what happened during his time as a sign of an impending judgment day.[180] In Ibn Kathīr's work, this concept is apparent even in the book's title, which in English translates to "the beginning and the end". Needless to say, Ibn Kathīr does not give the history of the Ayyubid women in politics high attention, and his opinion about a Muslim woman holding the position of queen can be surmised from the general Islamic theological position regarding appropriate political roles for women.

Ibn Wāṣil's approach to the presentation of his narrative could reveal his mind-set during the composition of his works, together with his understanding of the facts and circumstances surrounding the subjects he wrote about. The method propounded by Ibn Khaldūn compels the researcher to find out what kind of knowledge the historian–chronicler selected to report, and what he has ignored or avoided, in comparison to other contemporary and near-contemporary historians. This helps in examining and specifying the author's goals of recording specific information in preference to other material.

A final significant point is that the researcher followed Alex Mallett's method of presenting and dealing with Muslim historians' texts, as outlined in his article 'Islamic historians of the Ayyubid era and Muslim rulers from the Early Crusading Period: A study in the use of history'. Mallett depends on three main steps. First, he introduces his six historians; second, he presents their opinions about the elites and compares them; and third, he tries to find out why each historian has his particular attitude toward the elites and what factors influenced each one in adapting his own view. Due to the fact that this

[180] Ismā'īl bin'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya* ed.'Abd Allāh Bin 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, 17 vols., (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 1998), vol. 1, p. 6.

research is wider and covers many more points than Mallett's, there will be slight changes to the methodology in order to better suit the nature of the topic.

Chapter Two

Ibn Wāṣil and His World

Introduction

The general characteristics of Islamic historiography in the medieval era were described in Chapter One, in order to aid in understanding the features of Ibn Wāṣil's report. This second chapter represents the first and second steps of analysing the historical text according to 'Uthmān. The aim of this chapter is to give a clear picture of Ibn Wāṣil's life, his political background, and his work *Mufarrij*. The information in this chapter is the basis that can be used by any researcher to analyse Ibn Wāṣil's text from any angle. It helps in understanding many aspects of his background in general. For the purposes of this thesis, the material in this chapter will facilitate the examination of *Mufarrij* and answer the research questions related to the historian's attitude toward the political conduct of the Ayyubid women. Therefore, the focus will be limited to this issue exactly; this means that this chapter will not cover every detail of Ibn Wāṣil's background, but rather whatever is relevant and necessary to understand his text, in particular, to uncover and unpack his reaction toward Ayyubid women. This chapter is divided into three main sections: (1) the life of Ibn Wāṣil, with the aim of assessing his abilities, skills, and the factors that influenced him as he formed his notions about women; (2) the features of *Mufarij,* as these enable an understanding of the hidden meaning of the text and its relevance to his attitude about women; and (3) the political atmosphere in which the court historian lived: that can provide insight regarding to what extent the chronicler understands political life and its roles and protocols.

Ibn Wāṣil's Life

It is important in this section to provide detailed information about the historian from his childhood until his death. In this part there is an attempt to understand his worldview, and the factors that helped to shape his attitude toward the Ayyubid rulers, whether males or females. This will establish a clear description of the standards that he adopted in his measurement of the extent to which Ayyubid women distinguished themselves in their political role. Moreover, this part describes the historian's position vis-à-vis the court during each period and his relationships with the elites, which will help in analysing his report about them in the next chapters.

Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Salīm Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī was born in Hama (Ḥamā) in 604/1208. He was a Shāfiʻī scholar, a historian, and a judge.[181] As was the tradition in the education of Muslim males of his class at the time, he received the basics under his father's supervision when he was very young.[182] He studied the Quran and other Islamic sciences such as *hadith*, *fiqh*, and *tafsīr*. His education probably began when he was between the ages of four and seven years, as is still the tradition for children in the Islamic world.[183] His father, the judge of Hama, was close to the Ayyubid family, which led to a strong connection between the son and the Ayyubid rulers.[184] In 619/1222 Ibn Wāṣil's father was appointed as the judge of Hama and Maʻarrat al-Nuʻman in Syria during the reign of King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad I (587-618/1191-1221). In 622/1225, the king of Damascus, al-Muʻaẓẓam ʻIsā (615-624/1218–1227), selected him to teach in al-

[181] *Encyclopaedic Historiography of the Muslim World*, eds. N. K. Singh and A. Samuiddin, vol. 2 (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2004), p. 429; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids', p. 456.

[182] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 8; Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', p. 40.

[183] Muhammad Munīr al-Barrī, *al-Tarbīya al-islāmīya, uṣūlhā wa- taṭawwurhā fī al-bilād al-'arabīya* (Cairo: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1998), p. 176.

[184] Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East ', p. 13; Hirschler, 'Ibn Wasil: an Ayyūbid Perspective', p. 136.

Nāṣriyya al-Ṣalāḥiyya school in Jerusalem.[185] While the father was absent on the Hajj to perform pilgrimage, the king selected Ibn Wāṣil to teach in his father's place.[186]

The connection with the Ayyubid rulers and the status of Ibn Wāṣil's family might have provided him with a life of material ease that allowed him to broaden his knowledge,[187] instead of potentially spending his life in search of a livelihood. He had a great chance to travel from one city to another during the Ayyubid era, and he did so throughout Syria, Iraq, Hejaz, Egypt, and the south of Italy (see Figure 5 in Appendix).[188] His travels from 616/1219 to 697/1297 allowed him to contact and learn from many skilled professors, such as the historians Ibn Shaddād and Ṣibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī,[189] the poet Ibn Maṭrūḥ, the grammarian Ibn Ya'īsh, and the specialist in astronomical and mathematical studies Qayṣar ibn Abī Qāsim.[190] Via these scholarly connections he became a grammarian, a poet, a specialist in logic and mathematics, and learned in astronomy.[191]

All the above factors, his early education, travel, and scholarly connections, seemed to generate a solid foundation of knowledge for Ibn Wāṣil. This appeared in his scientific activities mentioned by scholars such as his student Abū al-Fidā' the governor of Hama, and al-Suyūṭī, who wrote about Ibn Wāṣil's intelligence and superiority over other *'ulamā'* of his time. A true polymath, Ibn Wāṣil taught in thirty different areas of

[185] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 142; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids', p. 456.

[186] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 208; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids', p. 457.

[187] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 8; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids', p. 456.

[188] About Ibn Wāṣil's journeys and their dates see Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 20.

[189] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 22-27; Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East', p. 13.

[190] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 22-27; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, historian of the Ayyubids', p. 456.

[191] *Encyclopaedic Historiography of the Muslim world*, p. 429; Hirschler, 'Ibn Wasil: an Ayyūbid Perspective', p. 137.

knowledge.[192] This unique ability had an impact on Ibn Wāṣil's works: twenty-one compositions in a variety of scholarly subjects.[193] Some of these works have been lost, others still exist as manuscripts, and only a few of them have been published.[194] Although as a judge Ibn Wāṣil adjudicated according to Islamic law, his writings mainly concern the rational sciences rather than religious matters. This is because he originated from Hama, which at that time was famous for these disciplines.[195] To clarify, he was a specialist in Islamic disciplines that are of the *manqūlāt* (transmitted) type. These are transferred as is; no one can create or add anything in their writing because these are based on the Quran and *ḥadīth*.[196] Ibn Wāṣil specialised in *maʿqūlāt* (the rational sciences); these are not connected with religion or ideology, but instead with philosophy and wisdom.[197] Any person can use his or her mind to think and to find their own method in writing and producing their work.[198] History is one of those fields of knowledge in which the scholar can analyse and interpret as according to his or her convications and principles. This can explain why Ibn Wāṣil's text is not merely reporting historical events, but rather it is a mixture of history, logic, and philosophy, reflecting his knowledge in these fields. Ibn Wāṣil's works are presented and described below.

He wrote five books on history, of which two, *al-Ta'rīkh al-kabīr* [the major history] and *Khaṣā'is al-anbiyā'* [characteristics of the prophets], have disappeared. The

[192] Qīṭāz, 'Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī', p. 109; al-Shayyāl,'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 19-31.

[193] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 22-27; Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East', p. 14.

[194] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 59.

[195] Ibid, p. 61.

[196] Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, pp. 221-222.

[197] Ibid, p. 251

[198] Ibid, p. 221.

third, *al-Ta'rīkh al-ṣāliḥī* [Ṣāliḥī history], was published in 1431/2010.[199] The fourth is *Naẓm al-durar fī al-ta'rīkh wa al-siyar* [stringing pearls of history and biography], which covers the history of Muslim monarchs until 692/1293, with a focus on the Ayyubids.[200] The fifth is the only book of his still in publication today, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*.

In the domain of logic, Ibn Wāṣil produced five books. *Al-Jumal fī al-manṭiq* [the sum of logic] is an interpretation of Afẓal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī's book *al-Jumal* [the sum].[201] Another book on the same subject was *Hidāyat al-albāb* [guidance of minds]. There were also *al-Mūjaz* [the summary], *Nukhbat al-fikr fī al-manṭiq* [selected reflections on logic], and *al-Anbrūriyya* [the imperial treatise], which was written for the German king of Sicily, Manfred (656-664/1258-1266).[202]

In the field of literature, Ibn Wāṣil wrote *Tajrīd al-aghānī* [the summary of songs] and *Sharḥ qaṣīdat Ibn al-Ḥājib* [an explanation of the poem of Ibn al-Ḥājib].[203] Two other works on the same subject (no longer available) were *Khafāyā al-afkār* [secrets of ideas] and *Sharḥ abyāt Ibn al-Lamaṭī* [an explanation of Ibn al-Lamaṭī's verses]. In pharmacology, he left *Mukhtaṣar al-adwiya al-mufrada* [summary of itemized medications]. In astronomy and mathematics, Ibn Wāṣil wrote *Nukhbat al-amlāk fī hay'at al-aflāk* [selected works in the domain of astronomy] and *Mukhtaṣar al-Majisṭī* [a

[199] Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Wāṣil, *al-Ta'rīkh al- ṣāliḥī,* ed. 'Umar Tadmurī (Sayda & Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣrīya, 2010). Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn',pp. 61-62.

[200] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 40; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, historian of the Ayyubids', p. 457.

[201] Hirschler, 'Ibn Wasil: An Ayyūbid Perspective', p. 137; Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', p. 63.

[202] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 61; Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', p. 64.

[203] *Mukhtaṣar al-aghānī* was published in six volumes by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo: Maṭb'āt Maṣr, 1955); Qīṭāz, 'Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī', p. 109.

summary of the *Almagest*]. On the subject of theology, he wrote *Mukhtaṣar mas'alat al-arba'īn* [summary of the forty issues].[204]

During the Mamluk era, as early as 659/1262, Ibn Wāṣil continued to teach in the Fatimid-era Aqmar mosque in Cairo; he served as a judge in Giza and Iṭfīḥiyya in Middle Egypt.[205] Moreover, he was the ambassador of the Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars (658-676/1260-1277) to King Manfred. He had a good relationship with the king and spent a substantial amount of time there. It was after this journey that he wrote his aforementioned book, *al-Anbrūriyya*, in 659/1261 as will be shown later.[206] It is notable that all Ibn Wāṣil's scientific writings are of the *maʿqūlāt* genre. This emphasizes his inclination towards rationalism , although he was well versed in *manqūlāt* as well. Consequently, he was affected by this tendency in writing his *Mufarrij*. Ibn Wāṣil's life influenced his writing; certain factors in particular qualified him to write his opus magnum, *Mufarrij*. The book includes many items of information that are clues to his character, or that even express his character quite clearly. All the above factors—his early education, his travels, his relationships with the Ayyubid court, and his scholarly connections—seemed to generate a solid foundation of knowledge that is evident in his narration as will be shown later. This could explain why his assessment regarding the political activities of women in his time was unique, as will be seen in the next chapters.

Mufarrij al-Kurūb

The implicit meaning

This section examines the importance of *Mufarrij* and its place among other contemporary and near-contemporary sources. Three main points are considered: the

[204] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 35-40; Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', pp. 62-63.

[205] al-Shayyāl, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 17; Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', p. 46.

[206] See Chapter Two, '*Mufarrij*, the meaning and the aim'.

content of *Mufarrij*; the value of the book as a contemporary and primary source of the study period; and the hidden meaning of the title of the book and its link with the content. The aims of this section are to discover Ibn Wāṣil's technique in writing about females and their roles in the politics of their states, to investigate the reasons that his report about women differs from other accounts, and to infer his aim in writing *Mufarrij*. These goals are to understand the historian's messages to readers of his text, in order to uncover his views regarding the place of women in the Ayyubid state.

The content of *Mufarrij*

From the title of Ibn Wāṣil's book, it might be expected that the text focuses solely on the Ayyubid dynasty era that covered the period from 569/1174 to 648/1249; however, the book actually deals with a longer period, starting from the reign of the Zangids up to the beginning of the Mamluk era, from 521/1127 to 683/1284-5.[207] It is likely that Ibn Wāṣil wanted to show and discuss the factors that contributed to the establishment of the Ayyubid state and to its decline. For more clarification, he begins his narration with the reign of 'Imād al-Dīn Zangī (521-541/1127-1146) and his relationship with Ayyūb Shādī, the father of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, He analyses the environment in which Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn lived before taking on a vital political role, with his uncle, the well-known military leader Asad al-Dīn Shirkūh, who was his mentor on the battlefield. Thus, Ibn Wāṣil tells the reader what made Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn successful. Regarding the collapse of the dynasty, he continues to record the Ayyubid history in Syria after the collapse of their state in Egypt. He might have wanted to stress the bravery of Ayyubid rulers in a most difficult time, when they faced the Mongol assault, as will be explained later.

[207] Ḥilmī and Aḥmad,' Notes on Arabic historiography', p. 94; Hirschler, 'Social contexts', p. 312; This date range ends later than the author's own life, but part of the book was written posthumously, by Ibn Wāṣil's student, as explained elsewhere in this chapter.

This book was written in 671/1272-3, at the end of Ibn Wāṣil's life, when he had returned to settle in his city Hama after decades abroad.[208] In the commencement of his narrative, especially for the Zangid and early Ayyubid eras, Ibn Wāṣil depended on the most reliable sources covering this period, such as 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī's *al-Fatḥ,* Ibn Shaddād's *al-Nawādir,* Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil,* and Aḥmad bin Yūsuf al-Fārqī's (d.557 /1181) *Ta'rīkh Mīāfāriqīn wa Āmid***.** In the rest of the book Ibn Wāṣil contributes his own observations, and that is the livelier part of his narration.[209]

Ibn Wāṣil, like other Muslim historians of that time, pays far more attention to political affairs and the lives of the ruling authorities than to portraying the social and economic aspects of the community.[210] In addition, such historians were mainly concerned with the general question of what qualities characterize the ideal rule. They commented on the state of affairs in their own lifetimes by describing and evaluating the former reigns. In the case of Ibn Wāṣil and his fellow chroniclers, these were 'Imād al-Din Zangī, his son Nūr al-Dīn (541-569/1146-1174), and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.[211] Generally, Muslim historians tended to consider previous generations as the best examples of Islamic leaders who ought to be emulated by later generations; these writers stress the honesty and dedication to Islamic principles of those leaders as part of their objective in writing history, as indicated in Chapter One. This explains why there are countless works about the Prophet Muḥammad and the 'rightly-guided caliphs' (*al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*), emphasizing not only their ideal behaviour but also drawing attention to how they responded to the challenges around them.[212] Ibn Wāṣil follows the same theme in his

[208] Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids', p. 458; Hirschler, 'Social contexts', p. 312.

[209] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 16; Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East', pp. 13-14.

[210] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 129.

[211] Nikolas Jaspert, *The Crusades*, trans. by Phyllis, G. Jestice (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 73.

[212] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 42.

Mufarrij, which can be accounted as a reaction to political developments as it focuses mainly on political events; the scholar's religious views appear only occasionally. Thanks to the chronicler's distinct focuses, the reader collects historical knowledge about Egypt, Syria, and al-Jazīra (Upper Mesopotamia) in the seventh/thirteenth century.[213]

Al-Shayyāl, the editor of the first and second volumes of *Mufarrij*, finds that there is more similarity between the texts of Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Wāṣil in terms of their discussion and selection of political affairs compared to the works of other historians who were Ibn Wāṣil's sources. Al-Shayyāl considers that this is because both historians depended on some sources that are not mentioned by them in either text; neither are these sources identified in other histories about the dynasty.[214] This similarity may due to the fact that they were both experts in the same fields of knowledge, especially logic.[215] As a result, their worldviews and manners of thinking were very similar. Generally speaking, a historian's education has a huge impact on his thinking and writing. Abū Shāma, for example, was a contemporary historian whose education limited to theological aspects,[216] and his religious worldview appears in his work *al-Rawḍatyn*, as mentioned in Chapter One. In contrast, Ibn Wāṣil's education expanded to a broad range of other disciplines, and his interest in the rational disciplines is evident in his writing.[217] This of course had an impact on his work; *Mufarrij* is not merely a history, it also includes passages that reflect the author's wide range of knowledge.[218] His attitude regarding the political role of

[213] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 13.

[214] al-Shayyāl, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 16.

[215] For more information about Ibn al-Athīr's education see 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Ṭulaymāt, 'Introduction', *al-Ta'rīkh al-bāhir fī al-dawla al-atābikīya (bi-al-Mawṣil)*, by 'Alī bin Muhammad Ibn al-Athīr, ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1963), p. 10.

[216] *Encyclopaedic Historiography of the Muslim World*, p. 17.

[217] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 87; Hirschler, 'Ibn Wāṣil: An Ayyūbid Perspective', p. 137.

[218] In *Mufarrij* there are statements that reflect Ibn Wāṣil's education in different fields, such as astronomy, theology, and the medical sciences. This topic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

women is the best example of this point, as will be seen later. However, the similarity between Ibn al-Athīr's and Ibn Wāṣil's work does not extend to every point; al-Shayyāl notes that in some areas the latter gives more details about certain events, which makes *Mufarrij* more valuable.[219]

The discussion in *Mufarrij* of women in Ayyubid history is allocated to the second half of the history of the late Ayyubid period. At that time, Ibn Wāṣil was close to the Ayyubid court, as he narrates in more than one place in *Mufarrij*.[220] He had a variety sources for his news about women.[221] Due to these factors he is well-positioned to portray the relationships among the different Ayyubid players, including women, as will be shown later.

Mufarrij contains a wealth of information, some in great detail, about the dynasty. It highlights the factors that helped in establishing the state successfully, and the author tries to analyse the reasons that lead to its decline; as part of his discussion he showcases the ability of women in leading their states safely. He depended on reliable sources written by contemporary historians, showing a deep understanding of the political atmosphere at that time.

The value of *Mufarrij*

This section sheds light on the significance of *Mufarrij*. The aim is to elucidate its worth among other sources that deal with the same topic. This can help to measure to what extent this affected his unique contribution in treating the political role of the Ayyubid women.

[219] al-Shayyāl, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 16.

[220] This point is discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

[221] Ibn Wāṣil's sources on women are detailed in Chapters Three and Four.

Modern scholars highlight the value of this source. Humphreys, for instance, finds that *Mufarrij* is more important than *al-Sulūk* of al-Maqrīzī: he criticizes Broadhurst for translating the former rather than the latter, as he thinks that there is a high demand for a translation of *Mufarrij*.[222] The book occupies an important place among other primary sources on the history of the Ayyubids.[223] According to al-Shayyāl these sources can be divided into two types: the materials written at the beginning of the dynasty and those that were composed in a later period.[224] *Mufarrij* is characterized as the only work written about the entire history of the state. It is a large and highly detailed work, especially with regard to the history of the later rulers. The author includes his experiences during his own lifetime.[225]

To clarify, other historians wrote about the Ayyubid either about the state's founder and the first half of the dynasty (e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, Ibn Shaddād, and Ibn Mammatā), or as part of their general histories (Ibn Taghrībirdī al-Maqrīzī, and al-Nuwayrī.). Still others dealt with the Ayyubid dynasty, such as *Shifā' al-qulūb fī manāqib Banī Ayyūb* by Aḥmad bin Ibrāhīm al-Ḥanbalī (d.876/-1471).[226] *Mufarrij* differs from *Shifā' al-qulūb* in that the latter is more of a biography of the Ayyubids than a history of them, and the author was not a contemporary.[227] Another book on the history of the Ayyubid dynasty is *Tarwīh al-qulūb fī dhikr al-mulūk Banī Ayyūb* by

[222] Callejas Martín, 'Los ayubíes', 407.

[223] Qīṭāz, 'Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī', p. 109; Francesco Gabrieli, 'Arabic Historiography', 105; Major, 'Al-Malik Al-Mujahid', p. 65.

[224] al-Shayyāl, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 5.

[225] Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East', p. 14.

[226]Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥanbalī, *Shifā' al-qulūb fī manāqib Banī Ayyūb,* ed. Madīḥa al-Sharqāwī al-Ẓāhir (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīnīya, 1996).

[227] al-Shayyāl, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 6.

al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d.1732/1791).[228] This author also was not a contemporary of Ibn Wāṣil's, and the book focuses only on the Ayyubid names, titles, nicknames, and family tree of the Ayyubids.[229] There is a missing manuscript titled *Ghāyat al-maṭlūb fī ta'rīkh Banī Ayyūb*. The only thing known about the historian is that he lived in the eighth/fourteenth century; thus he was not a contemporary of Ibn Wāṣil's, either. A summary of this book exists by an unknown author, titled *Ta'rīkh nuzhat al-nāẓir wa rāḥat al-khāṭir*. From the book summary, it is clear that the historian had relied on *Mufarrij* in his writing about the Ayyubids.[230] Finally, *Dhayl Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb* by ʻAlī bin ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib al-Malakī al-Muẓaffarī,[231] covers the period from 661/1263 to 695/1261.[232]

It is worth mentioning that there is disagreement between Shākir in his book *al-Ta'rīkh al-ʻarabī wa-al-mu'arrikhūn* and ʻUmar Tadmurī, the editor of this *Dhayl* and also a modern scholar, about the identity of the historian and his relationship with Ibn Wāṣil. Shākir believes that the writer was a scribe of the chancery in 683/1285 during the reign of al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd II (682-689/1284-1300), the governor of Hama. The writer thus would have been in touch with Ibn Wāṣil, who permitted him to write a sequel.[233] Tadmurī thinks that Shākir is confused about the name of the author of the *Dhayl*, and as a result he has made a mistake regarding the identity of the writer. Tadmurī found that the name that given by Shākir was that of an Egyptian jurist, not a historian from Hama who

[228] al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tarwīh al-qulūb fī dhikr al-mulūk Banī Ayyūb*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 2nd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1983).

[229] al-Zabīdī, *Tarwīh al-qulūb*, p. 35.

[230] al-Shayyāl, 'Introduction', *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 6.

[231] ʻAlī bin ʻAbd al-Raḥīm Nūr al-Dīn bin al-Mughayzil, *Dhayl Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, ed. ʻUmar ʻAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʻAṣriya, 2004).

[232] Qīṭāz,'Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī', p. 109; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids', p. 458.

[233] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Dhayl Mufarrij*, p. 5.

wrote the *Dhayl*.[234] He believes that the writer is Ibn Wāṣil's student, 'Alī bin 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib, as his name is mentioned at the end of *Mufarrij*.[235] In addition, Tadmurī indicates that the author's occupation was *kātib al-inshā'*, this was during the reign of al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II (642-682/1244-1284) in 682/1284 and then under the service of al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd II from 684/1286 until that king's death in 699/1300.[236] While the two scholars disagree on the origin of the sequel's author and his relationship with Ibn Wāṣil, they agree that the author was *kātib al-inshā'* during the age of al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd II. It is hard to decide which of the scholars is correct. This needs deep reading and comparison between what 'Alī bin 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib wrote and added to *Mufarrij* and what is written in the *Dhayl*; such further study is out of the domain of this thesis. Yet it is worth mentioning that the greater part of *Mufarrij*, written by Ibn Wāṣil, ends in year 661/1263. His student continued the text by recording the events in the same year and onward until the year 695/1296.

Interestingly, Ibn Wāṣil's *al-Ta'rīkh al-ṣāliḥī* is an extensive history from the Islamic point of view, covering the story of creation, and the lives of the prophets including the advent of Prophet Muḥammad, until King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's reign in 636/1239. It is important to stop to compare between this history and *Muffarij*. In *al-Ṣāliḥī* Ibn Wāṣil tends to contract the historical events too much to be able to cover this period: and for the late Ayyubid period he just mentions important events and figures. He does not mention his own views regarding the policy of any ruler and he does not pass judgment on political or tactical mistakes. Thus, the author's character is not obvious as it is in *Mufarrij*. Regarding the history of women, in *al-Ṣāliḥī* Ibn Wāṣil mentions in brief

[234] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', Dhayl Mufarrij, pp. 7-8.

[235] See *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 314.

[236] Tadmurī, 'Introduction', *Dhayl Mufarrij*, pp. 8-15.

their political roles in different historical eras; the Ayyubid women also are indicated very briefly as regents, but without referring to their names. Nothing is mentioned in *al-Ṣāliḥī* about the role of Shajar al-Durr because Ibn Wāṣil does not report on the sultan's death, and that was when Shajar al-Durr took on her political role. These differences between the two books are due to in his different aims in writing each one, as will be seen later.

If Ibn Wāṣil's contribution is unique in terms of the nature of the information that he includes in his text about the Ayyubid dynasty, he can also be considered as distinct in his attitude toward the elites compared to other contemporary historians during the sixth/twelfth century. In his view of Salāḥ al-Dīn, for instance, it can be noticed from his presentation that he agrees with other historians in emphasizing the strong link between piety and jihad during the periods of both Nūr al-Dīn and Salāḥ al-Dīn, This religious connection serves as a powerful motive for fighting against the Crusaders.[237] For example, in describing the conflict between Muslims and Crusaders Ibn Wāṣil uses strong words that expresses great enthusiasm for jihad or resistance, especially during Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's era, such as, "The weather at that time was roasting hot, and adversity intensified on people, but the sultan came out with his fully armed forces, roving about and inciting them [to battle]".[238] Also, "The Muslims were at the ready to face the Franks, and they annoyed and taunted them".[239] At the same time Ibn Wāṣil tries to be neutral in his judgment about any political mistakes by Salāḥ al-Dīn. These mistakes specifically relate to military strategy or poor decisions concerning the enemy, but not to matters concerning Islamic conduct. An example of this is when Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn freed all the Crusaders after capturing Jerusalem in 584/1188. Later on this policy was to the detriment of the

[237] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 193-194.

[238] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 2, p. 266.

[239] Ibid, p. 367.

Muslims because when the Crusaders regrouped and united in the city of Tyre, they were a more powerful force and formed a major threat to the Muslims. Ibn Wāṣil comments on this by saying:

> Demons and braves among the Franks met; their power became stronger and the heat of their firebrands increased. Their messengers were sent to Sicily and Andalusia to plead and ask for help. Aid came to them each time. This was because the sultan had been indulgent, as he had released anyone of them who had come to him.[240]

In contrast, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's historians such as Ibn Shaddād, Abū Shāma, and 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī praise the sultan highly.[241] For instance, 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī's response regarding the same mistake was "half silence and cryptic allusions".[242] Ibn Wāṣil's reaction, on the other hand, implies an independent historian who uses his own mind and rational thinking to approach the facts. Ibn Wāṣil usually gives his comments regardless of his feelings toward the ruler. Sometimes he may praise a ruler even if he was not in contact with him, as he does with Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad.[243] In contrast, he criticizes some rulers even though he had a strong link with them, and even though they treated him with respect, as he did with King al-Nāṣir Dāwūd (624-647/1226-1249). Ibn Wāṣil's relationship with King al-Naṣir Dāwūd began during the lifetime of the king's father, al-Muʿaẓẓam 'Īsā of Damascus. The king treated the historian generously; nonetheless, the historian praises the king's level of knowledge but not his policy. For example, Ibn Wāṣil avoided meeting the king in Jerusalem in 641/1243: he was not happy

[240] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 2, p. 274.

[241] D. S. Richards, 'A Consideration of Two Sources for the Life of Saladin', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 25 (1980), 46-65, 52-53; P. M. Holt, 'Saladin and his Admirers: a biographical reassessment', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 46/2 (1983), 235-239, 236-137; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 183.

[242] Lutz Richter-Bernburg, 'Observation on 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī's Al-fatḥ al-Qussī fī al-Fatḥ al-Qudsī', Festschrift for Iḥsān 'Abbās on his sixtieth birthday, *Studia Arabica et Islamica* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), pp. 373-379; p. 375.

[243] This point will be discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

with the king because he had given the city to the Crusaders as a result of the king's conflict with his cousin, King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn.[244] It seems that his focus was to evaluate the political conduct of the ruler regardless of his own views about the ruler's religious character or behaviour.

In terms of the history of women he provides far more detail than do other chroniclers. It can be said that he treats the history of women in positions such as that of queen and regent as seriously as that of men, in that he records it in detail. The best example is the regents Ḍayfa and Ghāziyya Khātūn. He is able to show their way in dealing with political affairs excellently. Moreover, he ignores any reports that he thinks are rumour, as will be highlighted in this thesis later.

Ibn Wāṣil's text can be seen as a distinct record in terms of two features: the nature or quality of the information that he poses, and his stance regarding the political conduct of the Ayyubid rulers. This of course has an influence on his view about the political role of Ayyubid women, as will be presented in detail in the next chapters.

Mufarrij, the meaning and the aim

Certainly, the title of the book has its connotations. This section investigates the meaning of the title. This can help in uncovering the link between this title and the nature of the facts that are written, and the historian's hidden messages and goals that can be inferred from between the text's lines. The aim is to find the link between his aim in writing the book and his evaluation of the political role of Ayyubid women.

Ibn Wāṣil named his book *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*. The question here is: Did Ibn Wāṣil choose this title for a specific meaning and message? To answer this question, it is important to explain the meaning of the book's title first, and then link

[244] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 333.

it with the book's contents. Modern scholars give the meaning of the title their attention, as this could help in understanding the aim of writing the book. Waddy, for example, gives this explanation:

> "Kurūb" is a strong word. Distress, anguish, in the plural. Its original meaning is the twisting of a rope, and the verb is used for the infliction of great pain, also for a sinking sun, a dying fire, for indigestion and for lassitude in heat wave…the other word "*Mufarrij*", is just as strong, and may point us to his motive—the tension, the dispersal of the gloom. "*Al faraj ba'd ash shidda*"-joy after stress.[245]

Hirschler agrees with Waddy:

> The meaning of the title (indicated that the anxieties regarding the reports of the reports of the Ayyubids should be dissipated). *F-r-j* (dissipation) *K-r-b* (anxieties) by choosing this term he set out his vision: the intension was to dissipate the anxieties of his audiences. The purpose of his text refers to human action dissipating immediate danger/fear.[246]

It appears that Ibn Wāṣil intended to select this title exactly. He seems to have a clear, specific message to express to the Muslim community. This message and title of the book could reflect his understanding of the world around him and what he wanted to say via his report. He possibly wanted to highlight the political effort of the Ayyubids, as other historians did. Those who are in the service of their masters produced particular work for their agenda. Mallet interprets the tendency of medieval Islamic chroniclers to portray certain rulers in a positive light as a part of their goal in giving ethical lessons from historical events.[247] Ibn Wāṣil was able to witness the dynastic transition from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks during his lifetime due to his strong connections with elites in both Egypt and Syria.[248] His text can thus be read as a response to political developments,

[245] Waddy, 'The Middle East Based on the Life of Ibn Wasil', p. 13.

[246] Hirschler, 'Narrating the Past', p. 169; Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 69.

[247] Mallett, 'Islamic Historians of the Ayyubid Era', p. 249.

[248] Hirschler, 'Social Contexts', pp. 316.

illustrating the qualities that make ideal rulers.[249] Moreover, in his *Mufarrij* he attempts to provide future generations with valuable lessons by describing and assessing the Ayyubid elites. He carefully balances the factors that influenced or caused political change during the Ayyubid period and addresses the dynasty's strengths and weaknesses in dealing with them. In doing so, he provides many models of Muslim rulers and their Islamic approaches to deal with external enemies.[250] It might be that in his mind those kings did their role honestly and perfectly even in the most difficult time in Islamic history, and that the value of this dynasty was that they were unique in having to face both the Crusades and the Mongols in the seventh/thirteenth century.

It is certain that *Mufarrij* is written for a general audience, while *al-Ṣāliḥī* is written for King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh (648/1250), the son of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn.[251] Therefore, the former is extensive and detailed, with the historian explaining the conflicts and diplomatic relationships of the Ayyubids and providing examples of wisdom and political lessons. Moreover, through his optimistic attitude, the historian shows the readers very good examples of a dynasty that had successful rulers from its foundation to its decline.

In contrast, *al-Ṣāliḥī* is short, as it is designed to be read by the sultan only. [252] To clarify, it is brief in order to give the sultan a direct message without giving him "lessons" directly. Muslim caliphs, sultans, and kings usually read the history of Islam to learn from the former generations, especially with regard to their political actions. Yet it is not always the case that they followed what they read, as many of them made fatal political

[249] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 12.

[250] Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East', p. 19.

[251] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 131; Ibn Wāṣil, *al-Ṣāliḥī*, vol. 1, p. 13.

[252] Hirschler, 'Ibn Wāṣil: An Ayyubid Perspective', p. 154,

mistakes.[253] The *al-Ṣāliḥī* history is short because it is designed to entertain the sultan, as a lengthy and detailed text could be boring; a short text might be the appropriate vehicle if the aim of writing the book is to give direct political messages to obtain insights into how great politicians led their states and dealt with difficulties.

It is worth stating that the relationship between the historian and the sultan was very strong. The sultan was more of a scholar (‘*ālim*) than he was a politician. The historian attended the sultan’s court frequently, during which the latter examined the historian in some scientific issues and the historian answered excellently.[254] Yet this strong relationship between them did not affect the historian in his evaluation of the sultan's skills as a politician, as will be seen in the next chapter. Therefore, it is not unlikely that in writing this history the historian’s aim is to give the sultan good examples from the lives of earlier Muslim rulers as to how an ideal ruler could be and how he could deal with the affairs of state. However, Ibn Wāṣil fell into the trap of courtesy, and this can be found in two things.

First, it is evident in the historian's way of writing about the sultan's father al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. For instance, the historian praises the elder sultan effusively:

> God, owner of the religion, gives His Majesty the King, Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, the scholar, the just, the star of the secular world and of religion; may God raise his supporters’ status, increase his stature in greatness, [for his] beautiful acts, generous ethics, noble lineage, extreme generosity, right policy and justice…[255]

[253] Ḥusayn Mu’nis, *al-Tarīkh wa-al-mu’arrikhūn: dirāsa fī ‘ilm al-ta’rīkh: māhīyatuhu wa-mawḍū‘ātuhu wa-madhāhibuhu wa- madārisuhu ‘inda ahl al-gharb waa‘lām kull madrasa wa-baḥth fī falsafat al-tārīkh wa-madkhal ilā fiqh al-ta‘rīkh* (Cairo: Dār al-Rashād, 2001), pp. 16-17.

[254] Ibn Wāṣil, *al-Ṣāliḥī*, vol. 1, p. 13.

[255] Ibib, vol. 2, p. 322.

Second, he ends his narration before the death of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. He does not mention Shajar al-Durr at all, as he was aware of the conflict between her and al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh. Based on this; it is significant to say that searching for the aim of writing any history is a vital step. This could refer to many messages between the lines. As mentioned previously, *Mufarrij* is written for a general audience; therefore, the historian felt relatively free in writing it. On the other hand, since *al-Ṣāliḥī* is written for a specific person, Ibn Wāṣil was more selective in choosing which historical facts he wanted to record. Moreover, his language was influenced dramatically by his worldview. A detailed comparison of these two books is a broad topic and beyond the scope of this thesis.

Coming back to *Mufarrij*, as mentioned before, Ibn Wāṣil focuses on the Ayyubid dynasty era, but it actually deals with a longer period, including the reign of the Zangids up to the beginning of the Mamluk. To illustrate, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn came to power in an era when both political and religious weaknesses were common; this is why he began by uniting the Muslims, in order to initiate jihad and to distinguish himself as a pious leader.[256] In Ibn Wāṣil's account Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's successors also were excellent politicians, and were brave enough to face their political affairs even after the collapse of their dynasty and during the age of the Mamluks. They continued their efforts at jihad until some of them were killed by the Mongols, such as al-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Aleppo in 658/1260.[257] Furthermore, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn faced only the Crusaders, and he enjoyed stability in his state, while his successors had to deal with the Crusaders, the Mongols, and their own internal conflicts.

[256] ʻAsi Husaīn, *ʻImād al-Isfahānī: hayātuh wa-ʻaṣruh*, 519-597/1125-1201 (Beirūt: Dār al- Kutub al-ʻIlmīyīya, 1991), p. 69.

[257] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 280.

In the careers of the Ayyubid women, Ibn Wāṣil found some political lessons. He studied and remarked on their actions in different circumstances, such as their political marriages, their diplomatic relationships, and their manners of dealing with political affairs in serious events, such as the illness and/or death of the ruler. Therefore, it was Ibn Wāṣil's view that, along with Ṣalāḥ Dīn, this house should be mentioned in history as a reminder and a lesson for the next generations. This may explain his choice of the word *Mufarrij* in the title. Ibn Wāṣil in this concept seems to make his own view about the life of the state. This is in contrast to Ibn Khaldūn's famous political theory of the cyclical pattern of the state.[258] The scholars Okene and Ahmad give a summary of this theory:

> To Ibn Khaldūn political administration lasts for four generations before it is overthrown or supplanted and replaced by a new one, which replenish and then, follow the same process to apogee and then, collapse. At rise and growth, rulership is held together and united by what he called *aṣabiyya* [intolerance], technically 'group feelings', 'cohesion', 'solidarity'. Due to solidarity and cultural togetherness, the group takes control of governance; administer justice and as time went by, the controlling group living a luxury and opulence of urbanization and sedentalization [sic] are also overthrown by fresher tribesmen, who soon became urbanized and are also overthrown by fresher tribesmen.[259]

This point of view from Ibn Wāṣil reflects an optimistic character: he feels that bad things do not last forever and good people continue to be found, even in difficult times. Due to the fact that his book is directed to a particular audience, and because he was a jurist, he may have wanted to express to subsequent generations some clues from history that match with the meaning of many verses from the Quran and the Hadith; one example of this is, "Verily, with every hardship comes ease; Verily, with every hardship

[258] Ibn Khaldūn, 'Al-Muqaddima', *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 98.

[259] Ahmed Adam Okene and Shukri B. Ahmad, Ibn Khaldun, Cyclical Theory and the Rise and Fall of Sokoto Caliphate, Nigeria West Africa, *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, vol. 2, no. 4, (n.p., 2011), p. 83.

comes ease."[260] God in this pair of verses tells believers that difficulty is always accompanied by something that mitigates it. Repetition is used in the Arabic language to confirm or emphasize the meaning. This repetition is a kind of promise that "ease will come for sure".[261] This attitude of Ibn Wāṣil's came from the religious side of his character. Perhaps he offers hope not just in the political arena but in people's personal lives. This is in accordance with his belief in what Prophet Muḥammad said: "Make things easy (for people) and do not make them difficult, and cheer people up and do not drive them away".[262] What is more, as a philosopher, it is possible that he viewed the late Ayyubid rulers as skilful in dealing with the state affairs. Ibn Wāṣil agrees with Ibn Khaldūn about the rise of the state: the founder usually is more powerful and less concerned about the luxury life than his successors will be. On the other hand, Ibn Wāṣil's worldview contradicts with Ibn Khaldūn's theory on the point of cyclical patterns, as the former believes that the state can keep its power even until the end of its era. Al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, Shajar al-Durr, and Ḍayfa Khātūn were among the later rulers; they are shown in *Mufarrij* in a positive light, as will be explored in the next two chapters.

Ibn Wāṣil's account can be considered as unique compared to other contemporary or near-contemporary historians. He agrees with them that Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was the best of the Ayyubid dynasty, but he also has his own point of view about the Muslim Golden Age during the sixth and seventh/twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Each historian had his own opinion of what the Golden Age was and who its rulers were, and

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[260] '*The Quran*, trans. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, ed. Farida Khanam (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2009), 94:5-6.

[261]Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, al-jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed by. Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ībrāhīm Aṭafayyish, 20 vols., 2nd edn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1964), vol. 20, p. 107.

[262] Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Kirmānī 'alā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: al-musammā al-kawākib al-darārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed by. Muḥammad 'Uthmān, 25 vols., (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1981), vol. 22, p. 3.

consequently tried to record his report of events into the wider historical, social, and cultural records.[263] Ibn Shaddād, for instance, was close to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as indicated before, and thus he limited the Golden Age to this most famous representative of the Ayyubid dynasty. In his *Al-Nawādir* his aim was to depict the sultan in the best light as mentioned before.[264] Not only did Ibn Shaddād praise him highly, he also portrayed him as an accomplished warrior.[265] By virtue of Ibn Shaddād's closeness to the sultan's family, his perspective on contemporary events is similar to that of other historians, advisors, and courtiers who tried to gain their leaders' favour by highlighting their good deeds rather than showing their faults.[266] What is more, unlike his friend 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī, Ibn Shaddād's life did not change for the worse after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death.[267] He was highly respected by the king of Aleppo al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī bin Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (589-612/1193-1216) and his sons, and grew wealthier as a result of their favours. In addition, he played a significant role in settling conflicts between the sultan's successors.[268] Most importantly, however, leading a life of luxury after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death did not change his opinion about the sultan. Instead, the political situation served to confirm to him his belief that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was the most pious Muslim leader as well as the best representative of the *mujāhid,* compared to his successors.

Another contemporary historian who should be mentioned here is Abū Shāma, whose judgment was very different from Ibn Shaddād's. Like Ibn Wāṣil, he lived during

[263] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades,* p. 204.

[264] See Chapter One, 'Methods and systems of Muslim historians'.

[265] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 62.

[266] Ibid, p. 166.

[267] 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī worked for King al-Afḍal bin Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. The king did not preserve his respect for that scholar, but instead, removed him from his position in the Ayyūbīd government. Near the end of al-Isfahānī's life he was spending the majority of his time in Damascus, where he produced most of his written works. See Husaīn, *'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī*, esp. pp. 24-25.

[268] D. S. Richards, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin, or* al-Nawādir al-sulṭāniyya wa'l-maḥāsin al-yūsufiyya *by Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād*, trans. D. S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 2.

the late Ayyubid period and the onset of the Mamluk era.[269] Comparing *Mufarrij* with Abū Shāma's *al-Rawḍatayn* and then *al-Dhayl* can help identify the difference between the two historians' perspectives. Hirschler notes that there are similar passages describing the same historic events in Abū Shāma and Ibn Wāṣil's books, but under different aspects that show that they had dissimilar views. Abū Shāma was of the opinion that good rule ended with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death: his rule was an exemplary period followed by deterioration. Ibn Wāṣil indicates that good rule continued, but under different rulers.[270] Hirschler asserts that the difference between the two historians is not just about their point of viewn, but also about their way of thinking and treating what they understand around them. He comments on this:

> Ibn Wāṣil thinks that ideal Islamic rule was still possible in the author's present. He considered his chronicle to be a continuous text, a Dissipater of Anxieties concerning the Report on the Ayyubid. He extended his text until the present without establishing any major breaks with the past. Whereas, it pertained to an unreachable past as Abū Shāma's point of view, he enclosed his chronicle in an encircled realm of the past; his chronicle ends without being continued to the present, which represents for him a qualitatively different period.[271]

As an example of this, in his work *al-Rawḍatayn*, Abu Shāma represents Nūr al-Dīn Zangī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as successful leaders. He expresses his attitudes toward the contemporary elites and their ways of dealing with hazards in the Islamic world at that time. This critical stance, as well as his modest social rank and his classical method in considering and understanding political incidents, isolated him from the court.[272] But he also discussed public grievances and criticized abuses of the ruling classes: in 644/1247, for example, he attacked the pervasive corruption in Damascus when he wrote a poem

[269] Hirschiler, 'Social Contexts', p. 323.

[270] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography,* p. 72; Hirschler, 'Narrating the past', p. 192.

[271] Hirschler,'Social Contexts', p. 328.

[272] 'Asi Husaīn, *al-Mu'arrikh Abū Shāma wa-kitābuh al-Rawḍatayn fī akhbār al- dawlatayn al-nūrīya wa-al-ṣāliḥīya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1991), p. 25; Hirschler, 'Social contexts', p. 313.

that included the names of those breaking the law. He did this in order to inform King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn about what was going on in Syria, without thinking about the potential consequences of this audacious deed.[273] Abū Shāma displayed this attitude until the end of his life; in 663/1265, he published his second book, *Al-Dhayl*, in which he wrote about the conquest of Arsūf in Palestine. He attributed the victory to the Muslim fighters whilst ignoring the role played by the sultan, al-Ẓāhir Baybars.[274] His method of criticizing contemporary leaders or omitting them altogether, seems to have been his way of expressing his opinion of them. In contrast, Ibn Wāṣil expanded this period to include even ʻImād al-Dīn Zangī. It might be that in his mind the first real triumph for the Muslim armies against the Crusaders occurred when an army led by ʻImād al-Dīn Zangī managed to recapture Edessa in 539/1144, a victory that revived in Muslims both hope and the spirit of jihad.[275]

Based on the above, it can be said that Ibn Wāṣil tends to be rational in dealing with the history of the late Ayyubid dynasty. He tries to balance between them and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in particular. It might be that this was due to his wide range of knowledge, and his travel and contact with other nations or the German kings. Muslims have always seen travelling as a common tradition and an opportunity; some travel in order to seek knowledge, while others travel in hopes of improving their livelihood.[276] These popular verses of poetry are attributed to al-Shāfiʻī (d. 204/ 820), the jurist after whom the Shāfiʻī School (*madhhab*) of jurisprudence is named:

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[273] Ibrāhīm al-Zaybaq, *Abū Shāma mu'arrikh Dimashq fī 'aṣr al-Ayyūbīyīn, 599 H/1203 M-665 H/1267 M.: Dirāsa taḥlīlīya fī sīratihi wa-āthārihi al-tārīkhīya* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2010), pp. 149-150.

[274] al-Zaybaq, *Abū Shāma*, p. 320.

[275] Qāsim ʻAbduh Qāsim, *Ta'rīkh al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 2005), p. 136; Stephen Humphreys, 'Zengids Ayyubids and Seljuqs', in, *The New Cambridge Medieval History,* ed. David Luscombe and Jonathan Riley-Smith, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 721-752 (p. 736).

[276] Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Shāfiʻī, *Dīwān al-Imām al-Shāfiʻī, al-musammā, al-jawhar al-nafīs fī shiʻr al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Salīm (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Sīnā, n.d.), p. 25.

Leave your country in search of loftiness.
And travel! For in travel there are five benefits:
Relief of adversity and earning livelihood,
And knowledge, etiquette, and noble companionship.[277]

It is worth highlighting that the Shāfi'ī jurist Ibn Wāṣil played a role in transmitting Arabic knowledge to the German kingdom (524-1231/1130-1816) during the age of King Manfred.[278] German kings were subsequently inspired by Islamic civilization and, to a certain extent, adopted the Arab administrative system and the Arabic language.[279] For his part, Ibn Wāṣil gained a lot from his travels. For instance, during his famous journey to Sicily, he broadened his knowledge through scientific debates with King Manfred and perhaps with other scholars in the royal court, and he found out a great deal about the German king's protocol regarding his court as well as the king's relationship with his Muslim citizens.[280] Of course, all of the historian's journeys left a significant impact on his treatment of political incidents when reporting them in his *Mufarrij*. In addition, they influenced the standards that he kept in mind while evaluating any Ayyubid ruler, whether a woman or a man.

Therefore, his view can be seen as more liberal, and his attitude can be understood from the title of his book; his personal optimism is apparent even in this title. In the light of his depiction of the late Ayyubid men and women in *Mufarrij*, it is worth mentioning that although they were less focused on jihad than their forefathers were, the historian avoids employing dramatic language when describing them. Instead, his presentation comprises more objective, unbiased language: he praises and criticizes their actions

[277] al-Shāfi'ī, *Dīwān al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī*, p. 61.

[278] Zayn al-Dīn 'Umar ibn al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Wardī: *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vols 2, vol. 2, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1996), p. 237; Hirschler, 'Ibn Wāṣil: An Ayyūbid Perspective', p. 136; Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, Historian of the Ayyubids', p. 457.

[279] Waddy, ' An Historian Looks at the Middle East', p. 17.

[280] For more information about what Ibn Wāṣil said about his journey to the German king, see: Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al- Wardī*, vol. 2, pp. 237-238.

equally. As an historian, he supplies the reader with a general picture, and some may argue that if he had offered judgments on the subject, that would have interfered with his evaluation. On the other hand, he highlights certain points which suggest that, in his view, this age was not entirely dark. For example, in the introduction, he writes:

> In this book, I have recorded news of the Ayyubid kings, and some of their virtues and ethics, as they are greater kings than those who came before them. With God's help, they captured Jerusalem from the infidels' hands; with their swords they humiliated the atheists, they cleansed the Egyptian places of the heresy of mysticism; and they built the foundation of the Ḥanafī creed. God reward their efforts, sanctify their souls, and grant them a high status in the afterlife.[281]

It is clear from this passage that he believed that during the medieval Islamic history; Jerusalem's recapture eventually could be attributed to Ayyubid kings. This nearly a century after it was occupied by the Crusaders in 488/1099.[282] Even within his report, Ibn Wāṣil is keen to give his justification for preferring the Ayyubid rulers, as found in this panegyric:

> One of the Ayyubid virtues that made them better than the former kings was that each one of two great kings dominated a great region. Then one of them fell into the other's grip, and he no longer had any soldiers or army. Although there is massive antagonism and rivalry, the stronger showed no aggression towards the weaker. In excessive generosity and righteousness, the former allowed the latter to return to his province.[283]

He gives his reasons for preferring the Ayyubids. This can be found in his comparison between them and the Seljūqs who suffered from similar familial disputes.[284]

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[281] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij* ,vol. 1, p. 1.

[282] Kenneth M. Setton, *A History of the Crusades: The First Hundred Years*, ed. by Marshall W. Baldwin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 368; Hillenbrand, *The Crusaders*, p. 20.

[283] This happened during the conflict between King al'Ādil's sons. King al-Ashraf (626-634/1229-1237) fought with King al-Kāmil against their brother al-Muʿaẓẓam. In 623/1226 al-Muʿaẓẓam arrested his brother al-Ashraf. This was in order to force al-Ashraf to help him to gain the territories that al-Muʿaẓẓam wanted (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, pp. 180-181).

[284] Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East ', p. 15.

> Before the Ayyubids, when a king (particularly a Seljūq king) arrested one of his brothers or cousins, he used to eliminate him either by the sword or by strangulation with a bowstring. The best thing the king could do was to arrest him and leave him to a miserable death. This was one of the best aspects of the Ayyubids as compared to the previous kings.[285]

Ibn Wāṣil observed that the Ayyubids were more merciful than the Seljūq rulers, who used to utilize methods such as execution or arrest in order to maintain their power. In the same way, the Mamluks also did not hesitate to apply harsher methods of rule, following the principle that governance is for the strongest. In order to attain the throne, therefore, their most courageous leaders would kill the sultan.[286] Ibn Wāṣil may have ignored the conflict of power, as this was common situation in politics; nevertheless, in his mind murder is not acceptable: according to the principles of Islam, regardless of the underlying circumstances, the killing of another human is a grave sin. [287]

Moreover, it might be that positive developments in the Ayyubid state during their era caused Ibn Wāṣil to respect them, such as increased opportunities for travel, and improvements in education, trade activities, military operations, and the economy. Most importantly, those Ayyubid women who attained positions of political power were as powerful as the men.[288]

Despite the fact that he is considered the historian of the Ayyubid court, in *Mufarrij*, Ibn Wāṣil seems to be unbiased toward any particular Ayyubid ruler, as indicated before. This may explain why he does not do as other historians, who wrote their historical accounts for a specific king in order to gain his approval, as did Ṣalāḥ al-

[285] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 140.

[286] ʻĀshūr, *Maṣr wa al-Shām*, p. 193.

[287] As mentioned in the Quran "….So We decreed for the tribe of Israel that if someone kills another person - unless it is in retaliation for someone else or for causing corruption in the earth - it is as if he had murdered all mankind. And if anyone gives life to another person, it is as if he had given life to all mankind. Our Messengers came to them with Clear Signs but even after that many of them committed outrages in the earth". Q 5: 32

[288] Waddy, 'An Historian Looks at the Middle East', p. 16.

Dīn's historians. Nevertheless, Ibn Wāṣil fell into the trap of intolerance and bias. When the historian devotes himself to a particular state, he might exaggerate in his description of some people or some political affairs, which places the accuracy and veracity of his information in doubt, as he may distort facts or introduce false reports in order to serve the interests of his state. Or, because of his pride and admiration for the state which he belongs to, his biased outlook could affect his report, and he provides information (that can be contradicted with historical truth) to convince the reader that his state deserves admiration and appreciation.[289] Ibn Wāṣil seems to be susceptible to this sort of bias when he indicates his opinion that the Ayyubids are superior, and ignores the efforts of other dynasties such as the Mamluks and the Zangids. Nonetheless, he admits that some of the late Ayyubid rulers were weaker, especially in comparison to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. In *Mufarrij*, for example, the sultan's prestige was no longer appreciated, and therefore his successor, King al-Afḍal 'Alī (589-658/1193-1160) was unable to maintain the empire as efficiently as his father had. Initially, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn planned that al-Afḍal 'Alī would be sultan in Damascus, whilst his other sons would rule elsewhere.[290] Although he and a great number of his father's statesmen attained his father's place and position in Damascus, al-Afḍ al 'Alī failed to maintain the legacy to its previous standard.[291] Ibn Wāṣil comments on how often al-Afḍal 'Alī made errors in his dealing with state affairs. He defines him as a weak ruler who had essentially wasted the accomplishments of his predecessor. Ibn Wāṣil provides examples that illustrate this, such as al-Afḍal 'Alī's failure to show respect to his father's courtiers, even though they had played a significant role in Ayyubid politics during the previous era, and the way that al-Afḍal 'Alī depended on his minister Ḍiyā' al-

[289] 'Uthmān, *Manhaj al-baḥth*, pp. 128-129.

[290] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol.1, p. 227.

[291] IbnTaghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 109; 'Āshūr, *Maṣr wa al-Shām*, p. 75; Michael Chamberlain, 'The Crusader era and the Ayyūbid dynasty', *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed.by Carl F. Petry, vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 211-227 (p. 219).

Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (brother of the historian Ibn al-Athīr) instead of dealing with governance himself. As a result, al-Afḍal was unable to make any decisions without his minister's influence, a point that demonstrates his weak political skills as a ruler.

It is necessary to pause at this point in order to discuss Ibn Wāṣil's methodology in writing his record. To clarify, in his narration he avoids transmitting facts from Ibn al-Athīr, preferring instead to gather his own information from reliable eyewitnesses such as 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī. This means his description reveals a personal view of the historian himself, since it illustrates the great care and accuracy with which he selects his sources. Clearly, Ibn Wāṣil carried out a great deal of investigation before forming any concrete conclusions concerning historical matters. This methodology in selecting his sources is one of Ibn Khaldūn's criteria in writing history: it can strengthen the text and make it a more reliable source, and the reader can trust the historian. His information and opinion about the Ayyubid women's ability to handle governance can increase the value of his *Mufarrij*. In light of Ibn Wāṣil's prejudice in favour of the Ayyubids, it can be said that bad conduct by them was used by him to express his own wisdom through his text and to give examples of how relief can come after problematic times.

This section has dealt with the internal meaning of *Mufarrij*; it shows the importance of the deep reading of the historical text while taking into account the historian's background. It has shown that the book title hides deep meaning and gives solid evidence that the text usually tells the reader a lot about the historian. *Mufarrij* expresses Ibn Wāṣil's political and religious affiliations, his worldview, his stance regarding the elites during his era, his character, and his way of thinking.

Mufarrij's Structure and Style

Examining the structure and the style of each historical record is a crucial issue. This step is an important part of analysing the historian's portrayal. This method revels vital historical facts regarding the text and its writer, and whether he was the only one who composed the book or there was another contributor.

Mufarrij is a work in six volumes, according to al-Maktaba al-'Aṣrīyya's edition and the one used in this research. The first part of the work demonstrates that the specific nature of contemporary events endowed this period with a particularly religious character and therefore could be called the Golden Age of the sixth and seventh/twelfth and thirteenth centuries; part one takes up volumes one and two. The third, fourth, and fifth volumes of *Mufarrij* contain part two of the work, covering the period from 589/1193 to 648/1250, which can be called the late Ayyubid dynasty. Important historical events compelled Ibn Wāṣil to change his focus so that he began, increasingly, to write about political affairs. Accordingly, in this part of the *Mufarrij* he dealt with the facts more rationally than before. In contrast to the first part, which reflects his religious character, Ibn Wāṣil now concentrates on the political background of events, and the political manners of the rulers. He does not interpret their conduct and action from the religious angle as he does with the former kings. This may be due to the fact that the former rulers were more religious than the later rulers were. The sixth volume comprises the third and final part of Ibn Wāṣil's account of the Ayyubids, and this differs greatly from his previous material. In this section facts are presented much less extensively than in the other two sections, and his style of writing is very different. It covers the period from 648/1250 when Shajar al-Durr became sultana of Egypt (an event that marked the end of Ayyubid state) to the beginning of the Mamluk era, and until the year 661/1263.

The sixth volume, or part three, differs from the rest of Ibn Wāṣil's text: as mentioned earlier, Ibn Wāṣil's student 'Alī bin 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib interfered in the organization of *Mufarrij*, and a deep reading of this part of the account leads one to discover the differences.[292] It is also very important in helping to identify the parts written by Ibn Wāṣil himself and thus to understand his assessment of events and people. The main change in this volume is his method of presenting history. First, in the rest of the book Ibn Wāṣil usually gives his main evaluation about each king after the latter's death. He discusses the ruler's personality, his piety, the extent of his justice towards his citizens, and whether he was a good politician or not. Each biography's length differs according to the importance of that leader and his role in the Ayyubids' history. In this final part of *Mufarrij* Ibn Wāṣil ceases to write such biographies. The last Ayyubid ruler to be given a biography is al-Nāṣir Dāwūd. Ibn Wāṣil ends his narration of events at 661/1263. His book covers the lives of Ayyubid kings during the Mamluk state, but he focuses on merely reporting their stories. When he mentions their deaths he does it in a few words. For example, when he mentions the Ayyubid King al-Ashraf, the ruler of Homs in Syria (645-661/1248–1263), he allocated a separate heading for the king's death. Under this he writes a short sentence, "The king al-Ashraf died from that sickness."[293] It is possible that Ibn Wāṣil tended to follow this method because he was not in direct contact with the Ayyubid kings during the Mamluk era and he did not know much about them because they were in Syria while he was in Egypt. Overall, this part of the book is not as detailed as earlier volumes. Apart from the reason given above, it might be because Ibn Wāṣil was busy, since he travelled a great deal during this period. For instance, he went on the hajj (major pilgrimage), visiting Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina in 649/1251. He

[292] Richards, 'Ibn Wasil, historian of the Ayyubids', p. 458.

[293] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 377.

returned to Egypt, and in 659/1261 he travelled to Sicily to visit the German King Manfred, which means that he did not have much time to make his evaluation about them because he was distant from their courts and the place of events.

However, there is a strong possibility that the brief information about some events in this part of the book may have been written by his student. This is because throughout the earlier parts of the text Ibn Wāṣil never mentions any historical fact without details, using reason in explaining the causes and results of each; but in this final part, news is mentioned in a few words, such as the story of the capture of al-Fā'izī, the minister of King al-Mu'izz 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak (684-655/1250-1257): "Sharaf al-Dīn al-Fā'izī was captured and arrested."[294] There is no indication that he was killed and no information about who killed him. However, this story can be found in al-'Aynī's history. The first wife of al-Mu'izz caused the assassination of al-Fā'izī:

> The reason for his killing was that King al-Manṣūr's mother had been alienated from her husband al-Mu'izz. He had a mistress and left them with the minister, and she was infuriated. He asked to redeem himself with money but she did not accept and asked that he be killed.[295]

Furthermore, the method that is followed in this section is similar to the method of student 'Alī bin 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib in his book. As mentioned previously, a deep reading of the texts of both *Mufarrij* and *Dhayl Mufarrij* is crucial for identifying and separating what Ibn Wāṣil wrote and what his student did.

Third, another difference in this final part is its organization. Throughout the rest of the book, when Ibn Wāṣil depicts any fact, he tends to include all related information completely, as long as he able to do so. Then he moves on to a new event. In this volume,

[294] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij,* vol. 6, p. 200.

[295] Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd bin Aḥmad al-'Aynī; *'Iqdu al-jumān fī ta'rīkh ahl al-zamān*, ed. Maḥmūd Rizq Maḥmūd, 2nd edn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīya, Markaz Taḥqīq al-Turāth, 2010), p. 144.

however, it is noticeable that the information regarding an event is divided into many parts and each part has a special heading. This suggests that this period's historical facts were not written or organized by Ibn Wāṣil himself, but by his student. For example, when he explains the events after the death of the Sultan al-Muʿizz he used eighteen headings, starting from the appointment of Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī, son of al-Muʿizz and his atabeg, Subsequent headings included Shajar al-Durr's removal to Dār al-Sultana; the people who killed al-Muʿizz and who took her to the Red Tower; the turbulence between Mamluks who were her supporters and al-Muʿizz's advocators; and the end of Shajar al-Durr, the Mamluks, and the servants who killed al-Muʿizz. Under each heading there is a short paragraph. All this information could simply have been written in one section under one heading such as "the events after al-Muʿizz' death"; it seems plausible that Ibn Wāṣil had written just such a short piece and his student added to it and organized it in subsections as described.

Fourth, the use of pronouns shows that in this volume there are some sentences that clearly are Ibn Wāṣil's own speech, and others which clearly indicate that Ibn Wāṣil's student made the contribution. For example "I saw the letters," and "I saw His Majesty my Sultan martyr King al-Manṣūr, who served him."[296] These are in contrast with statements written by al-Kātib such as, "The author of this history said…" or "Judge Jamāl al-Dīn, the author of this history, said…", when he refers to a story heard from Ibn Wāṣil.[297] Pronoun choice likewise makes it clear that al-Kātib added the headings to passages that were written by Ibn Wāṣil. Under the heading "Prince Ḥusām al-Dīn and the author embark on the Hajj", the depiction of this journey is obviously narrated by Ibn Wāṣil, as it states, "Ḥusām al-Dīn started to prepare himself for Hajj, and he asked me to

[296] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 290.

[297] Ibid, p. 133.

go with him. I agreed, and I got myself ready."[298] Another heading is "What the author saw of the epidemic in Egypt," followed by Ibn Wāṣil's comment under it: "The strangest thing that I saw in Egypt was that everyone suffered from a cough and fever, but nothing happened in Cairo."[299]

Fifth, in part three Ibn Wāṣil narrates news as hearsay: "the news came", "received news", or "the frequent news", which means that Ibn Wāṣil was not an eye witness to some of the events, due to his travelling abroad. However, Ibn Wāṣil sometimes asserts in the first person that he took the information from a trustworthy source: "I was told by one that I trusted."[300] This is in contrast with the earlier parts of the manuscript.

Sixth, Another strong difference between Volume Six and the preceding volumes is that in place of biographies of the sultans, kings, and the Abbasid caliphs in the text, there is an increase in the number of biographies of other elites, such as the *'ulamā'*, statesmen, and employers. Ibn Wāṣil rarely does this, and when he does, he gives his reasons. For instance, he allocates a large section to the biography of Fakhr al-Dīn bin al-Shaykh and he gives a reason for this, "His mother breastfed King al-Kāmil, so he and his brothers 'Imād al-Dīn, Mu'īn al-Dīn, and Kamāl al-Dīn grew up with the king and they had a high position in the state."[301]

The difference between the sixth volume and the earlier volumes of *Mufarrij* could be due to the fact that the political atmosphere definitely had an impact on Ibn Wāṣil's concerns and thus on his focus in his writing. At that time, the Muslim lands were

[298]Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 172.

[299] Ibid, p. 220.

[300] Ibid, p. 218.

[301] Ibid, p. 113.

attacked by the Mongols, who created a political catastrophe there since they had removed the Islamic caliphate after killing the last caliph in 656/1258. Ibn Wāṣil's comment about this was, "That is the greatest and the most heinous calamity that has ever been experienced in [the history of] Islam."[302] This disaster caused a change in the map of the Islamic world. In the Muslim's mind during the medieval era, God is the source of Islamic law and the caliph is the person who executes and enforces this law.[303] As a result, the Mongol invasion spread a feeling of spiritual emptiness since it changed the political centre of gravity. The Mamluks undertook their political role to face both threats to Islam—the Mongols and the Crusaders—at the same time.[304] They were capable enough to stop the creeping menace from the East and successfully managed to make the first landslide victory against the Mongols in the battle of ʻAyn Jālūt in 658/1260.[305] Like any other Muslim affected by this rapidly changing situation in the Islamic world, Ibn Wāṣil was affected too. It certainly kept him busy, and therefore he did not have time to write and organize this final part of his book as he had done with the previous parts.

This section highlights important points about the content and the value of *Mufarrij*. It helps in understanding Ibn Wāṣil's perspective, his attitude toward the Ayyubids, his aim in writing his book, and his intended message. All these aspects will aid in uncovering his attitude toward the role of women in the Ayyubid polity, especially the era of Shajar al-Durr who became queen, as will be explained in the next chapter.

[302] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 214.

[303] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 130.

[304] ʻĀshūr, *Miṣr wa-al-Shām*, p. 116.

[305] Aḥmad ʻAbd al-Karīm Sulaymān, *al-ʻUnṣurīya wa athruhā fī al-jaysh al-Mamlūkī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʻArabīya, 1988), p. 23.

Ibn Wāṣil's Time

This section investigates the political background of the period in which Ibn Wāṣil lived and wrote. The intention here is to give an overview of the political events, and to address the nature of the relationships among the members of the Ayyubid family and how they dealt with the political circumstances. This part mostly depends on *Mufarrij*. The objective is to explore Ibn Wāṣil's understanding of the political life around him and his view and attitude toward the Ayyubid women and their policies, as will be shown in the following chapters. This section is divided into two subsections: the historical background of the dynasty and the titles of the Ayyubid rulers, whether men or women.

Historical background

The Ayyubids originally were a Kurdish family; they were from Dvin, near the Garni River. By the time their dynasty was at its peak, their rule covered Egypt, Syria, al-Jazīra in Iraq, and Yemen.[306] They were Sunni Muslims and all of them followed the Shāfiʿī school with the exception of King al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsá of Damascus, who followed the Ḥanafī school.[307] A number of historians such as Ibn Shaddād mention that some members of this family asserted their Arab origins from the branch of the Umayyad caliph Marwān bin al-Ḥakam (64-65/684-685), because his mother was Kurdish.[308] They support their claim by stating that many Arab tribes travelled to Kurdish lands, settled there, and married among them.[309] They traced their lineage to Prophet Muḥammad through their ancestor ʿAbdu Manāf.[310] Muslim historians differ in their opinions about the origins of the Ayyubids. In contrast with Ibn Shaddād, Ibn al-Athīr believes that the

[306] Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 210.

[307] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij* vol.4, p. 211; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmar ʿAzzam. *Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and Syria 1137-1193* (Harlow; New York: Pearson Longman, 2009), p. 25.

[308] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Nawādir,* p. 3.

[309] Ibid, p. 79.

[310] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 4.

Ayyubids were pure Kurdish, with no Arab ancestry.[311] Ibn Wāṣil maintains a neutral position toward these claims, as he comments, "This is all that was said about their lineage, and God only knows what the truth is."[312] Ibn Wāṣil is in the middle between Ibn Shaddād, who was Salāḥ al-Dīn's supporter, and Ibn al-Athīr, who was Salāḥ al-Dīn's opponent. His comment indicates one of two possibilities: Either he did not believe that they had Arab roots, in which case, he does not support his claim with any evidence, which is contrary to his usual method throughout *Mufarrij*; because he wrote the book to praise the Ayyubids, he did not wish to display his true opinion regarding the matter of their lineage; instead, he decided to remain silent and to transfer the information as he had heard it. Or, his comment reveals an aspect of his academic personality: he adopted this position because he was unsure about the facts in this matter; thus, he made this neutral statement in order to gain the reader's trust. It seems true to Ibn Wāṣil's methodology that if he was not sure about a piece of information he would not treat it as fact until and unless he was sure about its validity. This can be seen as an indication of his credibility.

This debate leads to an important question: what is the significance for the Ayyubids of being able to claim Arabic descent? Obviously, as Muslims themselves, the Ayyubids were aware to what extent Muslim hearts were attached to Prophet Muḥammad and his family. Throughout Islamic history, Muslims have usually been more accepting of and more ready to give their support to a leader who is a descendant of Prophet Muhammad's family. Any ruler is more likely to be accepted by linking his parentage to

[311] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 225.

[312] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 6.

Prophet Muhammad.[313] Thus, the Ayyubid dynasty may have made this assertion to gain legitimacy and acceptance from the Muslim society.

Salāḥ al-Dīn, the founder of this dynasty, is its most famous personage. After the death of Nūr al-Dīn in 569/1174, the sultan started to expand the capacity of his state by adding Syria, the Hejaz, and Yemen to his base territory, Egypt.[314] As mentioned elsewhere, he had decided before his death to keep his throne and power with his sons and to achieve this he gave his sons control over the most important cities, while the other areas were ceded to the control of the rest of the Ayyubid family.[315] After his death in 589/1193 and as a result of his plan, his state split into fifteen small states.[316] Despite this vast state that he left, none of his family members managed to become as powerful as he had been.[317] As a result, the system of political power of the Ayyubids changed from the centralized model of the era of Salāḥ al-Dīn (who was the centre of his court), to the confederation power structure which was created due to the nature of the relationships among his successors.[318]

The absence of Salāḥ al-Dīn gave a great opportunity to his brother Sultan al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr I, who took advantage of the infighting between Salāḥ al-Dīn's sons that started in 590/1194 to achieve his own dream of ruling the state.[319] He played a major

[313] Maḥmūd Shākir, *al-Ta'rīkh al-Islāmī 5, al-dawla al-ʻabbāsīya*, 4th edn, vol. 1 (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1990), p. 43; Sayyid Amīr ʻAlī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-ʻArab wa al-tamaddun al-islāmī*, trans. Riyāḍ Ra'fat (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-ʻArabīya), p. 116.

[314] al-Fatḥ ibn ʻAlī al-Bundārī, *Sanā al-barq al-shāmī*, vol. 1, ed. Fatḥīya al-Nabrāwī (Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1979), p. 113; Azzam, *Saladin*, p. 119; Chamberlain, 'The Crusader Era and the Ayyūbid Dynasty' , p. 218; Maḥmūd Yāsīn Aḥmad Tikrītī, 'Al-Ayyūbīyūn fī al-Yemen ta'rīkhuhum al-siyāsī' (569-626/1174-1226), *Majallat ādāb al-Rāfidayn* 12, (Bghdad, 2007), pp.113-153, p. 113.

[315] Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, pp. 229-230; ʻĀshūr, *al-Ḥaraka* , vol, 2. p. 622.

[316] al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār*, p. 38.

[317] Ṭaqqūsh, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 231; ʻAlī al-Ṣallābī, *al-Ayyūbiyīīn ba'da Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 19.

[318] Hirschler, Medieval Arabic Historiography, p. 7; Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', p. 88.

[319] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 227; Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 234; al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār*, p. 39.

role in helping them to find a compromise, at the same time taking control and taking charge of the Muslim lands against the Crusaders. In the end, he managed to unite the state again in 596/1200.[320] His three sons were al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā; al-Kāmīl Muḥammad, ruler of Egypt; and al-Ashraf Mūsā (627-635/1229-1237), ruler of al-Jazīra, Khlat, and Harran.[321] After the death of al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr I, his sons fared better than Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's sons in controlling their enmity to each other.[322] This could be for two reasons. First, they were more skilled as politicians; this is clear from Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation about the realm of each of them.[323] Second, they were in a better position, possibly due to the absence of a person with the same character as al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr I, who was described by Ibn al-Athīr as a deceptive and cunning man.[324] This would have helped his sons to work together sometimes. They cooperated successfully at times to fight their enemies, such as when al-Kāmīl Muḥammad sought help from his brothers against the Crusaders during the fifth Crusade (614-618/1217-1221) that was over control of Egypt.[325] However, the game of politics and their own interests made them fight each other at other times, and this increased their vulnerability to external threats. They fell into disagreement towards the end of 620/1222 and the beginning of 621/1223. Al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā appealed to the Khwarezmians in Iran.[326] At which point, al-Kāmīl Muḥammad in turn requested help against his brother from King Frederick II (617-648/1220-1250), leader of the Holy Roman Empire, and promised to give Frederick not only Jerusalem, but in addition all the

[320] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 249; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 6, p. 144; Chamberlain, 'The Crusader Era and the Ayyūbid Dynasty', p. 220.

[321] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya,* vol. 17, p. 73; Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', p. 122.

[322] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 249.

[323] See *Mufarrij*, vols. 4 & 5.

[324] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 326.

[325] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil,* vol. 9, pp. 316-317; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 74; IbnTaghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 196; Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 299.

[326] About the Khwarezmians, see Chapter Two, 'Historical background'.

cities that had been retaken from the Crusaders by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.[327] As a consequence of this deed of al-Kāmīl Muḥammad's in 627/1229, the Muslim states were affected badly. With a stroke of the pen, they lost Jerusalem, the third holiest city to Muslims, along with the results of all of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's other victories, according to the aforementioned agreement, and this provoked and greatly irritated these rulers.[328] It led to their weakness, and instead of solving the problem and seizing the opportunity to retake Jerusalem (especially as the Crusaders had problems of their own), the infighting amongst them continued.[329] However, King al-Mu'aẓẓam 'Īsā and Sultan al-Kāmīl Muḥammad later combined forces against the Khwarezmian menace, and they vanquished their opponents in 627/1230.[330]

Serious political disputes among Ayyubid family members continued after the deaths in 635/1227 of al-Ashraf Mūsā and his brother al-Kāmil Muḥammad just a few months later.[331] To achieve the aims of special political interests, one of the Ayyubid dynasty members, al-Nāṣir Dāwūd who ruled Kerak in Jordan, capitalized on the anger and sadness, common in that Muslim society, about the Crusader occupation, and recaptured Jerusalem in 637/1239.[332] However, the Muslims soon lost the city again when power struggles intensified among the Ayyubid leaders. This pattern in relationships among the Ayyubid family members continued.[333]

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[327] 'Āshūr, *Al-Ḥaraka*, vol. 2, p. 789; Ernest Barker, *The Crusades*, Arabic translation: *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīya*, trans. al-Sayyid al-Bāz al-'Arīnī (Beirut, Dār al-Nahḍa al-'Arabīya), p. 109; Chamberlain, 'The Crusader Era and the Ayyūbid Dynasty', p. 223.

[328] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 378; Barker, *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīya*, p. 113.

[329]Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 173; 'Āshūr, *al-Ḥaraka* , vol. 2, p. 812; Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, pp. 312-314.

[330] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 384; Ṭaqqūsh, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 333.

[331] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 231;'Āshūr, *Maṣr wa al-Shām*, pp. 96-97.

[332] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 247; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 399.

[333] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 268;Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 353.

At the end of the Ayyubid period, when the Mongols attacked Syria in 658/1260, this was the situation of the Ayyubid states. Aleppo still enjoyed pride of place and power, as it had since King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī, the son of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. It remained under the control of his heirs until its defeat by the Mongols in 658/1260.[334] The Aleppo government was in a good relationship with Egypt until the era of King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf after the death of his grandmother Ḍayfa Khātūn; this relationship changed and led to wars, as will be mentioned in detail later.[335]

Homs was under King al-Mujāhid Asad al-Dīn Shirkūh (581-637/1186-1240), who spent his life in conflict with Hama in efforts to expand his sphere of control.[336] Moreover, he was an enemy of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, but his son King al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm (637-644/1240-1246) changed the government's policy and he became the sultan's ally when he ascended the throne after his father's death.[337] This friendship between them continued even during the era of al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm's son, Sultan al-Ashraf Mūsā II (644-661/1246–1263).[338] Hama also had been allied with Egypt since the age of al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd I (626-641/1229-1244).[339] This policy put Hama's governors in trouble with Egypt's opponents such as Homs. Hama also was in conflict with Aleppo from time to time, as will be discussed later.[340]

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[334] Rukn al-Dīn Baibars al-Manṣūrī al-Dawādār, *Zubdat al-fikra fī ta'rīkh al-hijra,* ed. D. S. Richards, (Beirut: al-Sharika al-Muttaḥida lil-Tawzī', 1998), p. 48; Chamberlain, 'The Crusader era and the Ayyūbid dynasty', vol. 1, p. 220; Humphreys, 'Zengids, Ayyubids and Seljuqs', p. 738.

[335] For more information see Chapter Four, 'The impact of regent mother on the policy of the young'.

[336] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 396; Ṭaqqūsh, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 354; Major, 'Al-Malik Al-Mujahid', p. 70.

[337] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 369; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 400.

[338] Ibid, p. 372.

[339] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 300; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 396.

[340] For more information see Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, pp. 228-375.

Egypt was controlled by Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, who struggled hard to become the sultan of Egypt in 637/1240.[341] The most important of his enemies was his uncle, King al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl (635-643/1227-1246), the ruler of Damascus. The sultan managed to attack Damascus and take control of it in 643/1246.[342] The other main enemy was his cousin, al-Nāṣir Dāwūd of Kerak, whose land would be taken by the sultan as well.[343] When al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn died in 648/1250 during the Seventh Crusade, his son al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān shāh became the sultan for a few months, but was soon assassinated by his rivals. After Tūrān shāh, Shajar al-Durr, the widow of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, became the first well-known female monarch in Islamic history in that same year. Her reign enabled the Mamluk dynasty to attain the throne in Egypt, as will be described in detail in the next chapter.[344]

In the dying days of the late Ayyubid period, the warring factions often asked other nations around them to support them in their conflicts.[345] Ibn Wāṣil focuses in his writing on an era that can be counted as the most violent in terms of political turbulence, as the Ayyubids faced great dangers that changed the geopolitical map of Islam during the medieval period.[346] The greatest threat came from the Crusaders. Their campaigns started in 489/1096 when they managed to capture Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem, establishing rule in those city-states as stated before.[347] Generally, the later Ayyubids

[341] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 288; ʻĀshūr, *Maṣr wa al-Shām*, p. 118.

[342] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 349; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 288; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, vol. 8, p. 506.

[343] For more information see Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp 67-68.

[344] See Chapter Three, 'Ibn Wāṣil's view of the actions of Shajar al-Durr upon her husband's death'.

[345] al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār* , p. 39.

[346] Taqush, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 7.

[347] Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad: Book XI*, ed. & trans. Elizabeth A. Dawes (London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1928) in Internet Medieval Source Book <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/AnnaComnena-Alexiad11.asp> [accessed 3 September 2018]; Barker, *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīya*, p. 153.

were busy with internal conflicts, and were not as motivated in their resistance to the Crusaders as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had been.[348] Therefore, the Crusaders were able to benefit from this infighting. For example, they collaborated with Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo in 638/1241 to fight against al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.[349]

The other grave danger was the Mongols, who appeared at the end of the sixth/twelfth century. They lived in Asia between the Amu Darya and Syria Darya rivers.[350] After the collapse of the Khwarezmian kingdom, it became easy for the Mongols to access the Abbasid caliphate.[351] They laid siege to Baghdad, the cultural capital of the Islamic world, in 656/1258, killing Caliph al-Mustaʿsim Billāh and massacring tens of thousands of Baghdad's inhabitants.[352] The Mongols continued their advance and captured the Ayyubid states in Syria. It is noteworthy that Hama and Homs continued as Ayyubid states under Mamluk acknowledgment after the Mongol invasion in 659/1216, during the reign of Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars.[353]

The Khwarezmian's relationship with the late Ayyubid dynasty was changeable according to their interests. Khwarezmia is by Khorasan, close to the Amu Darya River.[354] Their kings carried the title Khwārizm Shāh.[355] They had a brutal and bloody conflict with their neighbours the Mongols. When their king Jalāl Khwārizm Shāh died in

[348] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 203; 'Al-Malik Al-Mujahid', p. 67.

[349] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, v. 1, p. 407.

[350] Al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār*, p. 24.

[351] Al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār*, p. 166; 'Alī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-'Arab*, pp. 340-343.

[352] Amira K. Bennison, *The Great Caliphs: the Golden Age of the 'Abbasid Empire* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), p. 53; 'Alī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-'Arab*, p. 343.

[353] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 321.

[354] Ibn Isḥāq al-Karkhī, *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, ed. by Muḥammad Jābir 'Abd al-'Āl al-Ḥīnī and Muḥammad Shafīq Ghirbāl (n.p.:Wizārat Irshād al-thaqāfa qawmī, 1961), p. 168.

[355] al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār*, p. 91; al-Karkhī, *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, p. 168.

628/1231, the kingdom declined.[356] Their population dispersed, scattered in different places, but they retained their military strength and became an influential power in the seventh/thirteenth century.[357] Some of them gave strong support to Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb during his conflict with his relatives, while they had their own ambitions against him, as will be explained later.[358]

Another neighbour of the late Ayyubid was the Muslim state of the Rūm Seljuqs, adjacent to the Byzantine Empire in what is now Konya in modern Turkey.[359] The Seljuqs established their state there in Asia Minor in 470/1077. They carried the name Rūm Seljuq because this land was called Rūm (Rome) in reference to Byzantium, which was known among the Arabs by the name of Rūm.[360] As with the Khwarezmians, the Rūm Seljuqs' relationships with their neighbours were unstable.

From Ibn Wāṣil's portrayal of the political situations of the late Ayyubid states in Egypt and Syria, it is clear that he does not treat them as weaker rulers than Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. This factor makes his *Mufarrij* unique compared to the other chronicles. To clarify, when he reports their history, he does not compare them with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn; rather, he evaluates each one independently and according to that individual ruler's political career. Based on his logical thinking, it is expected that he put in his mind the changes that occurred in the political atmosphere around them; these included their relationships with each other with respect to the presence of the Mongols as well as the Crusaders. As mentioned before, via his record of political events, Ibn Wāṣil shows his own philosophy that is against Ibn Khaldūn's theory (the cyclical pattern of the state). To illustrate further, in the states' rise

[356] 'Alī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-'Arab*, pp. 336-339.

[357] al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār*, p. 128-129.

[358] For more information see next Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol 5, p. 349-351.

[359] Humphreys, 'Zengids, Ayyubids and Seljuqs', p. 740; al-Ṣallābī, *al-Tatār*, p. 39.

[360] Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 13, fn. 3.

and growth the Ayyubids experienced the phase of intolerance, and they experienced lives of luxury as well. However, the opulence of urbanization and sedentarization did not affect the level of their power. Through Ibn Wāṣil's depiction of the Mongols as a nation: their state system, movements, wars, and their barbaric way in dealing with the Muslims, it appears that he found the late Ayyubid rulers to be as brave as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Not one of the Ayyubids of Aleppo, for example, displayed any weakness at all until its collapse. Even in his report about Hama, the state never had a weak ruler. Moreover, he was not like other chroniclers who account the presence of women in politics as evidence of a state's weakness; on the contrary, he finds them complementary to the Ayyubid men. This could illustrate why his point of view differs from the other early historians. In total, Ibn Wāṣil's philosophy reflects his optimistic personality and his logical thinking.

Ibn Wāṣil explains in details the political incidents. His methodology shows deep understanding of the nature of the political relationships both among the Ayyubid rulers and between the Ayyubids and their neighbours from other nations. On this issue *Mufarrij* can be counted as the best source from a contemporary historian available on the history of the late Ayyubids. Ibn Wāṣil's strong relationships with the most important figures in the Ayyubid dynasty certainly helped him to achieve the level of detailed knowledge which he imparts in *Mufarrij*.

Ayyubid titles and honorifics

This part sheds light on the differences between various titles held by the Ayyubids; it will also explain the titles held by women, and how these titles affect the level of power of each individual. The aim of this section is to show the nature of the relationships among the Ayyubids and their relationships with the Abbasid caliph. This can explain why it is important for the new king or queen to ask for acknowledgment from the sultan or the caliph. This section will explain this relationship that can help in

understanding Ibn Wāṣil's stance, from the male elite's perspective, toward the political position of women.

When reading the history of the Ayyubids it is not uncommon to find their various titles and honorifics confusing. When the Ayyubid rulers are referred to in the Muslim historians' texts, some were called kings, others were called sultans, and still others were called both "king" and "sultan" at the same time. This brings up two questions: What, if any, are the political implications of these different titles? Could the titles of the Ayyubid women refer to any political position?

To answer these questions, it is important to explain each title and what it refers to. The male titles will be explained first, followed by the women's titles. *Mufarrij* is very likely the best text that can describe and explain these different honorific titles, as this text details the authority of the Ayyubid sultans and kings, and presents the nature of their relationships. This is due to the character of Ibn Wāṣil's text and his method in presenting his history in greater detail than the works of any other contemporary historian. To understand this, it is important to know the difference between the position of the sultan and that of the king in Islamic culture. Therefore, this point will be discussed from three angles: the monarch's authority; the relationship between a sultan and a king and the relationship of each of these in turn with the Abbasid caliph; and the mandate of the covenant. All these points will be examined with reference to *Mufarrij*.

On the topic of the ruler's authority, al-Subkī (d.771/ 1370) refers to it in his book *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya al-kubrā*. According to him, a sultan is one who rules two or more provinces, whereas a king is ruler over just one province.[361] A ruler who governs one city

[361] Tāj al-Dīn Abī Naṣr 'Abd al-Wahhāb bin 'Alī bin 'Abd al-Kāfī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya al-kubrā*, ed. by Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī an 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw, vol. 5 (Dār Ihyā'al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1964), p. 315.

is called an emir (*amīr*) or a governor. With regard to the administrative authority, al-Subkī mentions that the emir must defer to the sultan and the king. It is noteworthy that between a sultan and a king there is no difference in rank, but rather the level of authority is based on the relative power of each one. In other words, the less powerful defers to the more powerful.[362]

Al-Subkī's statements about these titles are borne out in Ibn Wāṣil's report about the Ayyubids. The Ayyubids of Egypt carried the titles of sultan and king at the same time, as they controlled Egypt and some territories in Syria. In their administrative system, for instance, the sultan lived in Egypt but appointed a *nā'ib al-sulṭān* (deputy) to govern the lands to the east in Syria, or vice versa if the sultan was resident in Syria. For example, Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad settled in Egypt, and his son al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was his deputy in their Syrian territories.[363]

Accordingly, al-Subkī (who lived during the Mamluk period) criticizes people who called the emir of Hama "the sultan". He comments, "The writers of our times make a mistake when they call the ruler of Hama 'sultan'. He is neither sultan nor king, because he controls only Hama."[364] To explain, Hama became part of the Mamluks' territory after the Mongol invasion. Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars later gave it back to the Ayyubid emir al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II (641-683/1244-1284) under the sultan's authority, as mentioned before. It seems that the writers during that time would refer to the Ayyubid ruler of Hama as a sultan either to show their respect for this dynasty and their role in Islamic history, or because some of these writers worked for the Ayyubids of Hama. For instance, in *Mufarrij* al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II is called a sultan. This was probably done by Ibn

[362] al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya* ,vol. 5, p. 315.

[363] For more information see Chapter Three, 'The image of the Jawārī in *Mufarrij*'.

[364] al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya*, vol. 5, p. 315.

Wāṣil's student al-Kātib and not by Ibn Wāṣil himself, for two reasons: first, because Ibn Wāṣil is elsewhere very precise in using titles and honorifics; and second, al-Kātib was employed by this ruler, as mentioned earlier.

Regarding the relationship with the caliph: the Abbasid caliph was the top authority in the Islamic world, and he would acknowledge or refuse to acknowledge Muslim rulers in other states.[365] This process was called *taqlīd* (appointing).[366] This political protocol was common between the Abbasid caliph and the other sultans in different Muslim states.[367] The former gives them his recognition and installation, and they maintain their loyalty and religious respect for him.[368] It can be said that the title of 'sultan' (*sulṭān*) was created by the Abbasid caliph, and the position was the highest one in the Ayyubid political system.[369] Generally, it was bestowed via a specific process: this happened in a big celebration, with *khil'a* (luxurious clothing offered as a mark of honour) given to the new sultan. Based on this, the caliph granted the sultan two spheres of authority: military and civil. This position was given to the most powerful warriors, such as Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Moreover, this post was hereditary.[370] According to *Mufarrij,* the new sultan usually needed acknowledgement from the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. For example, sultans Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn were keen to ask his support in order to be recognized as legitimate leaders.[371] This protocol became one of the most important steps taken by the sultan to consolidate his authority. For example, when al-

[365] Levanoni, 'Šağar ad-Durr', p. 215; Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, p. 280.

[366] Abū Muḥsin, 'Khulafā' Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn', p. 104.

[367] 'Alī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-'Arab*, p. 354.

[368] Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-dawla al-'abbasīya*, pp. 157, 159, & 162.

[369] Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr, Nuẓum al-ḥukm wa al-Idāra fī 'Aṣr al-Ayyūbiyīn wa al-Mamālīk, *Mawsū'at al-Ḥaḍāra al-'Arabīya al-Islāmīya*. 3 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-'Arabīya lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1995), vol.3, pp. 335-384, p. 344.

[370] 'Alī, *Mukhtaṣar Ta'rīkh al-'Arab*, pp. 354-355.

[371] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 194; 'Āshūr, Nuẓum al-Ḥḥukm, p. 344.

‘Ādil Abū Bakr I became the sultan of Egypt he sent to the caliph in Baghdad to legitimize himself by the caliph’s recognition.[372] On his part, in 604/1208 the caliph gave his acknowledgment and gifts to Sultan al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr I and his sons.[373]

With respect to a king and his relationship with the caliph, it can be said this status was also created by the Abbasid caliphs. The first who carried this title was Nūr al-Dīn Zangī, who was called *al-Malik al-‘Ādil* (the just king). This honorific linked with an outstanding feature of the ruler’s character.[374] This explains why each of the Ayyubid rulers carried specific honorifics, such as *al-‘Ādil*, *al-Afḍal* (the best/most preferable/most bounteous), *al-Kāmil* (the perfect/unblemished), and others.

As for the rest of the Ayyubid kings and emirs, *Mufarrij* shows that it was important for them to gain recognition from the sultan of Egypt. For example, in 613/1216, before his death King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī of Aleppo expended a great deal of effort to obtain from Sultan al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr I a guarantee to keep the throne under the control of his son al-‘Azīz Muḥammad.[375] It is noteworthy that al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī sought this guarantee from the sultan, not from the caliph. This means the caliph’s acknowledgement entailed his full trust in the sultan to decide what is best for the future of all the kings in the dynasty. This might have been due to the weakening of the central administration in Baghdad and the long distances between the seat of power of the Abbasid caliph and the far-flung places around the caliphate where political affairs occurred.[376] Therefore, it was important for the kings and emirs to seek the sultan’s approval. However, both sultans and kings were under the caliph’s observation. The caliph used agents who had no official

[372] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 180.

[373] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 180-182; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘Arab*, vol. 29, p. 25.

[374] ‘Alī, *Mukhtaṣar ta’rīkh al-‘Arab*, p. 355.

[375] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, pp. 236-237.

[376] Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta’rīkh al-dawla al-‘abbāsīya* , 7th edn (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā’is, 2009), p. 162.

status, such as traders and dealers, to transmit to him news of the rulers' doings. When the caliph grew weaker at the end of the Abbasid era, those informants were placed as messengers in the ruler's court. As a result, this new function gave them some authority as they acted as representatives of the caliph.[377]

Just as it was required of an Ayyubid sultan to seek the caliph's acknowledgment in order to legitimize his position, an Ayyubid king or emir must ask for acknowledgment from the sultan. According to Ibn Wāṣil, however, if the sultan was not pleased with the new king, this would not affect the latter's authority.[378] The best example of this is when Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad refused to give his response to the government in Aleppo after the death of King al-'Azīz Muḥammad and during the regency of Ḍayfa Khātūn. This spread a spirit of hostility between both parties, as will be explained in detail later.[379] Nevertheless, Aleppo kept its power; it played a crucial role in the region at that time, as mentioned earlier. Moreover, Ḍayfa Khātūn was not keen to have acknowledgment from al-Kāmil Muḥammad's successor as will be shown later.[380]

Regarding the mandate of the covenant, the sultan of Egypt would choose one of his own sons to succeed him after his death; as mentioned before, Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn designated his son al-Afḍal 'Alī to be the only sultan among his brothers after their father's death. Al-'Ādil Abū Bakr I appointed his son al-Kāmil Muḥammad as sultan of Egypt.[381] According to Abbasid protocol the new sultan should ask for the caliph's

[377] 'Alī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-'Arab*, p. 351

[378] 'Āshūr, *Nuẓum al-ḥukm*, vol. 3, p. 357.

[379] See Chapter Four, 'Resistance and conflict over power according to Ibn Wāṣil'.

[380] See Chapter Four, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn's independence and sovereignty'.

[381] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Arab*, vol. 29, p. 24.

acknowledgment in an official request; if he agreed, the caliph would give the title of "sultan" to this new ruler.[382]

Ibn Khaldūn distinguishes between a sultan and a king from different perspective. He believes that the title "king" refers to a symbol of the power, especially in times of war; the term "sultan", on the other hand, refers to one who leads a luxurious life and has high prestige.[383] Ibn Khaldūn's opinion could help in understanding another aspect of the relationship between both positions in the medieval Islamic era. His perspective depends on the level of power. To apply his concept to the Ayyubid sultans of Egypt, it can be said that they had both features. They held great military and political power, as those sultans were the first line of defence for the Islamic world against the Crusaders. It is well known that the Crusaders had wanted to capture Egypt ever since the first campaign in 512/1118. This was because of the value of Egypt at that time.[384] Furthermore, they enjoyed a more luxurious life than the other Ayyubid kings.[385] This was due to their successful trade with the Crusaders. Especially in the late Ayyubid dynasty, socio-economic interests played a key role in external relations before religion became the main goal. Within this period, relations were focused very much on business, and therefore, alongside the emergence of the Crusades commercial cities began to appear.[386] Commerce had been an interest of the Ayyubid elites since Sultan al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr I. He opened the way for trade, and in 608/1211 the number of Europeans doing business with Egypt was around three

[382] ʻAlī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-ʻArab*, p. 355.

[383] Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʻrīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 87.

[384] The Crusaders had become aware of the importance of Egypt since the first campaign when the king of Jerusalem Baldwin I (494-512/ 1100-1118) tried to attack Egypt, but he died before completing his plan (Setton, *A History of the Crusades*, p. 410; Qāsim, *Ta'rīkh al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīya*, p. 135.

[385] For more information about the luxury life of the Egypt sultan see ʻĀshūr, *Nuẓum al-ḥukm*, vol. 3, pp, 350-356.

[386] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 203-204; see also p. 225.

thousand.[387] His successors continued this policy; under al-Kāmil Muḥammad's rule trade flourished dramatically, and as a result, the value of the dinar increased. The commercial city-states of Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Amalfi competed with each other both militarily and commercially. They built fleets of ships, both for their own protection and to support extensive trade networks across the Mediterranean. Being in competition, these republics engaged in shifting alliances and warfare, even with Muslims, according to their needs. They relied increasingly on Italian sea transport. As a result, thousands of Crusaders poured into the Eastern Mediterranean, creating bases, ports, and commercial establishments even in Muslim lands. The law in these colonial entities was administered by a governor appointed from the home state, and there would be a church under home jurisdiction and shops selling their food.[388] Based on the foregoing, it can be said that with military and economic power and access to amenities of luxury, the sultans of Egypt deserved to bear both titles, sultan and king, at the same time.

While the Ayyubid men held the titles of sultan, king and emir, the Ayyubid women had an important title too, and that is *khātūn*. This title is a Turkish term; it was given to noblewomen from the royal family, and it means "princess".[389] Interestingly, some women held other titles in addition to *khātūn*. [390] For instance, Ḍayfa Khātūn, the regent of King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Aleppo, carried some of the earliest feminine honorifics and royal epithets known: *'Iṣmat al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn* is one of Ḍayfa Khātūn's titles that is engraved on her architectural legacy in Aleppo.

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[387] al-Ṣallābī, *al-Ayyūbīīn ba'da Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, pp. 634, 638; Chamberlain, 'The Crusader era and the Ayyūbid .

[388] 'Āshūr, *al-'Alāqa bayna al-bunduqiya wa al-sharq al-adnā al-islamī fī al-'aṣr al-Ayyūbī* (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), pp. 47 & 61; Marshall, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, p. 268.

[389] Al Rudainy, 'Women in the Būyid and Saljūq Periods', p. 7.

[390] Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr, 'al-Mar'a fī al-Ḥaḍāra al-'Arabīya', *Mawsū'at al-ḥaḍāra al-'arabīya al-islāmīya*. 3 vols, vol.3, (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-'Arabīya lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1995), pp. 385-428, p. 415

Another title bestowed on women was *al-Sitr al-Rafi' wa al-Ḥijāb al-Manī'* (the elevated curtain and unreachable barrier).[391] Tabbaa gives a good translation and explanation of this title, stating that the literal meaning of these words was:

> …sometimes used to describe fortifications. But figuratively they refer to virtue and chastity and should perhaps be translated as "the virtuous veil and chaste lady". These are followed by "the Merciful Queen" and "the refuge of world and religion", titles that were later adopted by Queen Shajar al-Durr of Cairo.[392]

One might wonder why the Ayyubid princesses carried titles which seemed to convey higher praise than the titles of their male counterparts did. This can be understood by looking at the documentation regarding the Ḥaram al-Sharīf (the Temple Mount of Jerusalem).[393] These archives give some examples that refer to the status of women commoners in Jerusalem during the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras. According to those texts, woman enjoyed great respect during both periods; they bore some beautiful titles and nicknames, such as Sitt al-Kull (the lady of all), Sitt al-Nās (the lady of the people), Tāj al-Nisā' (the crown of women), 'Iṣmat al-Dīn, and others.[394] This means that not only royal women but even female commoners held titles of respect.[395] For instance, one woman married a wealthy man; whenever she left her home, her husband provided her a donkey to ride, along with two men—one to lead the donkey and another to act as her servant.[396] This reflects the high level of treatment the women enjoyed, not just in Jerusalem but in any city of the Ayyubid dynasty. This puts into context why the Ayyubid

[391] Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, p. 26.

[392] Ibid.

[393] Maḥmūd 'Alī al-Sayyid 'Alī, 'Wathā'iq al-ḥaram al-qudsī al-sharīf maṣdar li-dirāsat ba'ḍ jawānib al-ta'rīkh al-ijtimā'ī li-al-Quds fī al-'ahdayn Ayyūbī wa al-Mamlūkī'. *Majallat al-Dir'īya*, year 2, nos. 6 & 7, August 1999).< http://www.alukah.net/culture/0/29254/ > [Accessed on 3 May 2017].

[394] 'Āshūr, 'al-Mar'a fī al-ḥaḍāra al-'arabīya', p. 415; Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *al-Mar'a fī Miṣr al-mamlūkīya*, (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma lil-Kitāb, 1999), p. 22.

[395] 'Āshūr, 'al-Mar'a fī al-ḥaḍāra al-'arabīya', p. 414.

[396] 'Āshūr, 'al-Mar'a fī al-ḥaḍāra al-'arabīya', p. 415; 'Abd al-Rāziq, *al-Mar'a fī Miṣr*, p. 23.

princesses carried these titles. It also gives an impression of the status of the Ayyubid female in relation to the Ayyubid male, and it helps explain why Ibn Wāṣil respected the political role of women, as he was raised in the Ayyubid society, which gave the female a special position.

It has been noted that Ibn Wāṣil excels in portraying the political atmosphere around him and in describing the Ayyubid system of government. This reflects his deep understanding of all the political issues around him and his strong presence during contemporary political events. He shows that the political system of the Ayyubids changed over time from the era of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn until the end of the dynasty. This was mainly a result of the nature of the hostile relationships among the Ayyubid family members; it allowed neighbouring nations to interfere in their affairs, and to benefit from them. Nonetheless, their conflict did not affect their sense of belonging and loyalty to their house. This appeared clearly through their relationships in administrative protocol as sultans and kings, which involved a great deal of reciprocity even though each one governed an independent state. In addition, the Ayyubid women retained a level of high respect even in the atmosphere of political conflict, indicating the extent to which the Ayyubids admitted and accepted the political ability of women. This social custom might have influenced Ibn Wāṣil in his assessment of the presence of women in the political field, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter is meant as a guide for the rest of the thesis. It is the first step in analysing the historical text based on ‘Uthmān’s recommendations. This phase is concerned with identifying the external meaning and the main aim of writing the text of *Mufarrij*. It is an attempt to explore how Ibn Wāṣil’s life, worldview, and education

influenced his relationship with the Ayyubid court. Therefore, this chapter shows that his affinity in *Mufarrij* is not for a specific ruler, but for the whole dynasty. The chapter also highlights the value of his work *Mufarrij* for the study of Ayyubid history, especially regarding women; the attention he paid to writing his book and what he wanted to say through this text, as a main idea. This chapter shows the ability of Ibn Wāṣil in describing the political scene in a way that can give the audience the sense that the historian had a clear picture of the nature of the political relationships among members of the late Ayyubid dynasty, and of the relative position of each state. Another significant point in this regard is that *Mufarrij* can be counted as one of the best sources for authoritative information and explanation of the titles and honorifics used by the Ayyubid royal family, and the political meaning of these terms. All these points are crucial as they will be the tools used to measure and understand Ibn Wāṣil's attitude toward the Ayyubid women and his evaluation of their political activities. Moreover, it will link this attitude with the factors that affected him in his assessment, such as his political affiliations, courtly patronage, and emotional investment. Building on this chapter, the following chapters will discuss *Mufarrij* in the light of the information known about its author and his work. The material in this chapter will also help to answer the research questions at the end of the thesis. The next chapter, Chapter Three, will deal with the deep meaning of *Mufarrij* as it pertains to the unique cases of women with political power in Islamic history, in their roles as queens.

Chapter Three

Jawārī and the Throne in Ibn Wāṣil's View

Introduction

The previous chapter examined Ibn Wāṣil's world, including his personal and his political understanding. It also explored *Mufarrij*'s features, the inner meaning of the title and the author's worldview. All of the foregoing will be taken into account to analyse and understand his attitude toward the political roles of the Ayyubid noblewomen and the *jawārī.* This chapter and the following chapter represent the second phase of analysing the historical text based on 'Uthmān's method in analysing the historical text, which is to study salient political facts individually and in depth. In order to explore the historian's evaluation of the political role of women as queen, represented by Shajar al-Durr, and to highlight the factors that influenced him when he reported the Ayyubid history in this particular period, this chapter will focus on the *jawārī* and their political role in the late Ayyubid dynasty as portrayed through Ibn Wāṣil's narration, whilst drawing a comparison between his accounts and those of other Ayyubid historians. The main aim of this chapter is to investigate *Mufarrij* to discover the extent to which Ibn Wāṣil gives importance to the *jawārī* in the political field, and how he expresses his perspective of them as represented by his depiction of Shajar al-Durr. This chapter will deal with historical facts from three main angles: first, Ibn Wāṣil's religious and historical knowledge; second, the image of the *jawārī* in early and modern historical records, comparing Ibn Wāṣil's attitude to those of other scholars; and third, the political career of Shajar al-Durr as viewed from various aspects. This last part shows Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation of the political role and impact of the *jawārī* through his portrayal of Shajar al-Durr's political career, and the factors that affect his assessment.

Slavery has been practised throughout the ages and in all civilizations and religions, and it was widespread in different societies.[397] Islam amended a pre-existing system of slavery; as with Christianity, the Islamic value system brought laws to improve the social conditions of slaves.[398] Slaves are mentioned in the Quran with the term *milk al-yamīn* (slaves under [one's] ownership).[399] The terminology *milk* expressed male dominion in both the marital relationship and slavery. That is, the man controls the wife, and owns the slave.[400] Muslim societies have used numerous terms to refer to slaves. Terms applied to female slaves often describe their assigned roles in the community, for example, *qiyān* for singing-girls and *sarārī* (sg. *surrīya*) for concubines.[401] The term *jawārī* (sg. *Jāriyā*) was used to describe the female slaves who acted as cultural educators.[402] If the *jāriyā* gave birth to a child fathered by her owner, she became *umm al-*

[397] 'Abd Allāh 'Alwān, *Niẓām al-riqq fī al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām lil-Ṭibā'a wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī' wa-al-Tarjama, n.d.), p. 11; Abū Zayd Shalabī, *Ta'rīkh al-ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya wa al-fikr al-islāmī* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2003), p. 277.

[398] H. St. L. B. Moss, *The Birth of the Middle Ages, 395-814* (Oxford, 1964), p. 384.

[399] Tāj al-Sirr Aḥmad Ḥarrān, *al-Nuẓum al-islāmīya* (Benghazi: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), p. 119; Simon Barton, *Conquerors, Brides and Concubines: Interfaith Relations and Social Power in Medieval Iberia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2015), p. 33.

For more information about the Islamic rules regarding slaves see: Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, pp. 5-7; Ḥarrān, *al-Nuẓum al-islāmīya*, p. 120; Abdul-Munim al-Hashimi, *The Days of Prophet Muhammad with his Wives*, trans. by Nour M. Jaffala (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2011), p. 38; al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī al-muḥtāj*, vol. 4, pp. 439 & 450; Ibn Qayyim, *Zād al-ma'ād*, vol. 3, p. 103; al-Shalabī, *Ta'rīkh al-ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya*, p. 279; Ulrike Mitter, 'Unconditional Manumission of Slaves in Early Islamic law', *Der Islam* 78 (2001), 38; Kuwaiti Ministry of Endowments, *al-Mawsū'a al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, 45 vols. (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmīya, 1984-2006), vol. 29, p. 265; Shaun E. Marmon, 'Concubinage, Islamic', in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer, 13 vols (New York: Scribner, 1983), vol. 3, p. 528.

[400] Kecia Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 164.

[401] Khalil Athamina, 'How did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women: the Case of the Jawari, or the Female Slaves', *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de estudios árabes*, 28/2 (2007), 400. 10.3989/alqantara.2007.v28.i2.42; Barton, *Conquerors, Brides and Concubines*, p. 33; W. G. Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), p. 3.

[402] Julia Bray, 'Men, Women and Slaves in Abbasid Society' eds. Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith, *Gender in the Early Medieval World East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 136; Barton, *Conquerors, Brides and Concubines*, p. 33. Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, p. 3.

walad (lit. 'mother of the child') and was thus granted special rights.[403]

Although the Islamic legal system in theory should have protected slaves from injustice, their social status was variable from era to another. The *jawārī* had rights that could in theory offer them a decent life. However, their rights were not always honoured in real life, especially during the Umayyad period when the caliphs prefered the free women.[404] Nonetheless, during the Abbasid era the slaves became an effective and influential power in Muslim society. They contributed to effecting deep changes in the structure of that society, as well as in its culture.[405] This is oppesite of the free women who was isolated in caliph's palace called the ḥarīm (harem).[406] It is obvious that the position of the *jawārī* under Abbasid rule was similar to their status in any other Muslim society during the same era. In other words, in the Ayyubid community the *jawārī* had the same position as in the Abbasid. However, this did not negatively affect the place of free women, as can be seen from the lives of Shajar al-Durr and the regent queens Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāziyya Khātūn. This might be because, as mentioned before, the Ayyubids seem to have treated women with respect.Ibn Wāṣil lived in the era when *jawārī* had a

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[403] *Al-mawsū'a al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 29, p. 265; al-Shirbīnī (al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī), *Mughnī al-muḥtāj ilā ma'ānī alfāẓ al-minhāj,* in *Tuḥfat al-ḥabīb 'alā sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-ma'rūf bi-al-iqnā' fī ḥall alfāẓ Abī Shujā'*, annotated by Sulaymān ibn Muḥammad Bujayrimī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2007), vol. 4, p. 450; Marmon, 'Concubinage, Islamic', vol. 3, p. 528.

[404] For more information about the status of slaves under the Umayyad reign, see: 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-al-ishrāf*, ' ed. by Abd Allāh Ismā'īl al-Ṣāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣāwī, n.d.), p. 228'Alī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-'Arab*, p. 172; 'Ashūr, al-Mar'a fī al-Ḥaḍāra al-'Arabīya, pp. 416-417; Marmon, 'Concubinage, Islamic', vol. 3, p. 527; 'Abd Allāh 'Afīfī, *al-Mar'a al-'arabīya fī jāhilīyatihā wa-islāmihā*, 2nd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Rā'id al-'Arabī, 1982), pp. 7-8; Athamina, 'Legal Status of Women', 388, 395; Ḥarrān, *al-Nuẓum al-islāmīya*, p. 119.

[405] For more information about the slave position during the Abbasid era see, Amal al-Kurdī, *Dawr al-nisā' fī al-khilāfa al-'abbāsīya* (Amman: Dār al-Yāzūrī lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2014), pp.13- 14; Mājid, *Ta'rīkh al-ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya*, p. 125-127; Marmon, 'Concubinage, Islamic', p. 528; Al Rudainy, 'Women in the Būyid and Saliūq Periods', p. 16; Ḥasan, Dawr al-Jawārī wa al-Qahramānāt, p. 46; 'Afīfī, *al-Mar'a al-'arabīya*, p. 49; D. Fairchild Ruggles, 'Mothers of Hybrid Dynasty: Race Genealogy, and Acculturation in al-Andalus'.*Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 34 (2004), 74; Bray, 'Men, women and slaves', pp 134- 137.

[406] Marmon, 'Concubinage, Islamic', p. 528; Al Rudainy, pp.13- 14; Amal al-Kurdī, *Dawr al-nisā' fī al-khilāfa al-'abbāsīya,* p. 738.

considerable influence in Muslim society; thus it is expected that he had a deep and precise understanding of the link between their rights of *jawārī* in Islam and their function in Islamic politics. This can be verified by two factors: his religious knowledge as a judge and jurist, and his high level of education. These facilitated his knowledge about the history of the *jawārī* and their social and political roles during previous and contemporary Islamic periods. In his *Mufarrij* he does not express surprise about the social and political roles or actions taken by anyone simply because they were slaves. Additionally, he is keen to follow and portray the Abbasid caliphs and their news even with the *jawārī*, as will be proved later in this chapter.

The jawārī as portrayed by historians

This part of the chapter demonstrates how Muslim

scholars in the past and in modern days view the institution and impact of the *jawārī*. This section is divided into three parts: first, Ibn Wāṣil's and other historians' assessments of the impact that *jawārī* may have had on the political scene; second, evaluations by chroniclers and modern scholars of the *jawārī* and their influence on Islamic society; and third, the image of the *jawārī* in Ibn Wāṣil's narration. The aim of this chapter is to present the background to the perception of the political role of the *jawārī* in the Islamic court. Moreover, it will help to compare Ibn Wāṣil's opinion to those of both early and modern scholars on the significant influence of the *jawārī* in the political field.

Ibn Wāṣil's understanding, as compared to other early historians, of the *jawārī*'s political role

As stated before, it is obvious that Ibn Wāṣil and other chroniclers had heard and read about the impact of the *jawārī* in the Abbasid court, and they had their own

assessments regarding whether this impact was positive or negative. This topic is a broad one, which is outside the scope of this thesis, so in the following lines a summary will be given.

The image of the *jawārī* in Islamic history

Based on the high impact of the *jawārī* in politics, the chroniclers were divided into three groups. One group of historians was against the *jawārī* becoming involved in political affairs; therefore, the image of *jawārī* portrayed in their histories is negative. In some historians' minds, the *jawārī* caused many problems in the state, or were a sign of the decline of the state.[407] Al-Ṭabarī, in his history *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk,* is the best representative of this group: he mentions the story of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II (101-105/720-724) and his *jāriyā* Ḥabbāba, describing her as the *jāriyā* who preoccupied him and prevented him from performing his duties toward his state.[408] Al-Muqtadir's reign (295-320/903-932) provoked some writers, such as Ibn al-Athīr and al-Suyūṭī, to significantly criticize the presence of the *jawārī* in the Abbasid court.[409]

The second group of historians approaches this issue from a different angle. In the view of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, whose book *al-Aghānī* paints a positive picture of the *jawārī*, Ḥabbāba was a talented woman who played a significant role in improving the songs, poetry, and arts of her time.[410] The third group of chroniclers have a neutral

[407] Nadia Maria El Cheikh, 'Gender and Politics: the Harem of al-Muqtadir', in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900,* Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith, eds. (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 147-161 (p. 149).

[408] Muḥammad bin Jarīr bin Yazīd al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk,* ed. by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2nd edn, 11 vols,(Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif,1976) , vol. 7, pp. 23-24.

[409] Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil,* vol. 7, p. 74. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ta'rīkh al-khulafā',* ed. by Ḥamdī al-Dimirdāsh, (n.pub: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 2004), p. 278; al-Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-al-ishrāf* , p. 328.

[410] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt,* p. 59.

attitude toward the *jawārī*: al-Mas'ūdī, for instance, in his famous work *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawhar,* tends not to give much attention to their impact on politics.[411]

The position of the *jawārī* in politics is also a matter of debate even among modern historians,[412] and like the earlier scholars, they comprise three groups. The first are those who condemn the presence of *jawārī* in Islamic politics. In their minds, the *jawārī* spread corruption, folly, and madness in the Islamic society. Thus, they blamed the *jawārī* for the decline of the Islamic ethic. This group includes 'Alī Muhammad al-Ṣallābī: in his book *al-Tatār,* he asserts that the *jawārī* were a sign of the decadence in Islamic society and a decline in religious morals, as they were a tool for increasing adultery and the consumption of alcohol that came with the spread of brothels.[413] 'Afīfī, in his book *al-Mar'a al-'arabīya*, accused the *jawārī* of causing the deterioration of the position of Arab free woman as well as the moral degradation of the caliphs.[414]

In the group supportive of the *jawārī*, Al Rudainy, in her thesis 'The role of women in the Būyid and Saljūq periods of the Abbasid Caliphate', finds a bright side to the phenomenon of *jawārī*. In her view, they changed and improved the Islamic society in economic, social, and cultural aspects.[415] The group which tends to present *jawārī* history without prejudice includes Amal al-Kurdī, in her book *Dawr al-Nisā' fī al-Khilāfa,* and Khalil 'Athamina, in his article on the impact of Islam on the legal status of women, which discusses the case of the *jawārī* in particular.[416]

[411] Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām,* p. 66.

[412] El Cheikh, 'Gender and Politics', p. 140.

[413] al-Ṣallabī, *al-Tatār,* p. 40.

[414] 'Afīfī, *al-Mar'a al-'arabīya,* p. 10.

[415] See Al Rudainy, 'Women in the Būyid and Saljūq Periods'.

[416] Athamina, 'Legal Status of Women'.

The most important attitude to be examined is the negative one. It seems that there are various motives behind this attitude of some early and modern historians toward the *jawārī*. One reason may be that these scholars' views are influenced by their attitude in general about the political presence of women in the court. This can be clearly found in El Cheikh's statement, where she singles out the portrayal of the political role of women in Islamic sources. In her view, historians focused on common negative patterns attached to women throughout the public political world.[417] She gives examples of early historians such as Abū al-Fidāʾ and Ibn al-Ṭiqtaqā, who both agree that women's political power was a sign of the decline of the dynasty.[418] This negative attitude toward the presence of women in political life might be because Islamic law specifies that the head of state should be male.[419] In addition to any religious reasons, some historians have biases which stem from other inherited customs in their patriarchal societies, and this is especially true for the modern scholars as will be shown later in this chapter.

Another reason for the negative attitude toward the *jawārī* among some scholars may be because the majority of women who played a determining role in Islamic history were from the *jawārī* class, and an obvious reason is that, as mentioned earlier, the *jawārī* were less restricted under Islamic law than were free women. For example, in Islam, if a slave commits a sin or a crime, her punishment would be lighter than that of a free woman who committed the same infraction. This is mentioned clearly in the Quran:

> If any of you cannot afford to marry, then [he should marry] one of his believing maids whom he possesses. You are one of another. So, marry them with their owner's permission, and give them their dower according to what is fair, neither committing fornication nor taking secret paramours. And if, after they are married they commit adultery, they shall have half the punishment prescribed for a free woman.[420]

[417] El Cheikh, 'Gender and Politics', p. 154.

[418] Ibid, p. 160.

[419] *al-Mawsūʻa al-fiqhīya*, vol. 6, p. 218; al-Kurdī, *Dawr al-nisāʾ fī al-khilāfa*, p. 16.

[420] Q. 4:25.

It is also a strong possibility that *jawārī* were more interested in practising politics than were free women.[421] Free women were also limited by family duties, whereas the *jawārī* were able to ignore some of the more stringent rules.[422] This means that *jawārī* had more freedom in exceeding the Islamic law in dealing with men. An astute *jāriyā* could attain an elevated position by using physical and emotional allure to monopolize her master's mind and heart, thus breaking down the boundaries between them.

The influence of the *jawārī* brought about a huge change in the nature of the caliph's responsibilities, since they were his consorts, not only in the household, but also in that they shared political power with him.[423] Another possible reason for the *jawārī*'s interest in politics could be their psychological status as a group that suffered at the beginning of life and were forced to behave diplomatically as servants. Each one of them had to struggle and work hard in order to compete with other *jawārī* to appear to be unique and to be recognized by the ruler. Once she became close to the court, her position changed as she became well respected and treated accordingly. This process improved her life both materially and socially.

Some scholars, whether early or modern, look upon the *jawārī* as inferiors, for various reasons. From an aspect of class discrimination, they probably consider this class as the lowest one in Muslim society, and they may feel that the *jawārī* do not deserve a better status. After all, the *jawārī*'s key role was just to entertain the men of the courts. Some scholars objected from a religious aspect because when the *jawārī* were with their

[421] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt,* p. 89.

[422] Nada Mourtada-Sabbah and Adrian Gully, "I am, by God, Fit for High Positions": on the Political Role of Women in al-Andalus', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 30 (2: 2003), pp.183-209, 209; María J. Viguera, '*Aṣluḥu ʾLil-Maʾālī*: on the social status of Andalusī women', *The Legacy of Muslim Spain,* Salma Khadra Jayyusi (ed.) (Brill, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 709-724 ,(p. 712).

[423] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt,* p. 56.

masters, these gatherings involved drinking, dancing, and singing.[424] Even in the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the *jawārī* practised their role during the Hajj season, attracting people who had come to listen to their poetry.[425] All in all, it is not surprising that historians were so disparaging about the *jawārī*. The best example of this is the modern scholar al-Ṣallābī, a jurist, writer, historian, and Libyan political analyst whose education and training is in Islamic law, and he has written volumes on topics such as the pillars of Islamic belief.[426] Therefore, his works in the field of history are infused with his traditional religious worldview.[427]

In regard to the historians who ignore the political role of women, Abbott thinks that early historians treated the history of women with caution; the chronicles tend to report women political activities if it necessary.[428] Yet this attitude was not limited to the Muslim chroniclers; it was a general attitude and it is male thinking. In Europe during the Middle Ages, for example, those who recorded history were men whose reports focused on the king's life; in contrast, the contributions of royal women of that time have been largely ignored or forgotten.[429]

It seems that the role of the *jawārī* in medieval Islamic history will remain a subject of debate. Neither conservatives who have a religious agenda nor anyone who views the *jawārī*'s influence in the politics of the Islamic state as negative, generally condone their impact on it, and such people present this history with disapproving language. On the other hand, liberals and those who concentrate on the urban development and cultural aspects tend to appreciate their role.

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[424] ʿĀshūr, *Dirāsāt fī ta'rīkh al-ḥaḍāra*, p. 264.

[425] Ibid, pp. 255-256.

[426] Official website of ʿAlī al-Ṣallābī: http://alsallabi.com/frontend/who [accessed 3rd January 2019].

[427] See al-Ṣallabī's books *al-Tatār* and *al-Ayyūbīīn baʿda Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.*

[428] Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām*, p. 63.

[429] Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 2-3.

The image of the *jawārī* in *Mufarrij*

Ibn Wāṣil has his own way of expressing his views about the *jawārī*. In his narration, he admits that the *jawārī* had a role in changing the course of political events. This is in contrast to some historians who tend to ignore the *jawārī*'s impact. Historians who wrote about the Ayyubid dynasty, such as Ibn Shaddād and 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, do not include these women in their histories. It is possible that their main concern was to embellish Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's achievements. Historians contemporary with him such as Abū Shāma, and even historians after Ibn Wāṣil's time, mention the *jawārī* if necessary, but they keep it brief.[430] Ibn Taghrībirdī is one such example, as his history is quite detailed, with the exception of his account of Shajar al-Durr.[431] Al-Maqrīzī just mentions the *jawārī* parenthetically and without details, either as gifts between two kings or as *umm al-Walad* when he refers to any Abbasid caliph.[432]

The unique feature in Ibn Wāṣil's narration is that he takes care to report the *jawārī*'s impact on historical events, whether it was negative or positive; he simply reports their news as it happened, using polite language. The following lines will explain the different categories of *jawārī* political presence during the Ayyubid era, according to him. Ibn Wāṣil acknowledges the harmful influence of the *jawārī* when they were able to destroy a relationship or cause a political crisis and separation between two parties. Their strong influence even pushed a wise man like Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to put off his jihad for a period in 538/1143, in order to fight another Muslim king, as summarized here from Ibn Wāṣil's account: Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Karā Arslān bin Sokmān bin Artuk (500-588/1107-1192) the governor of Hasankeyf (*hiṣn Kaifā*), married the daughter of Sultan 'Izz al-Dīn

[430] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatyn*; Abū Shāma, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqdisī. 'Dhayl 'alā al-Rawḍatayn: Tarājim Rijāl al-Qarnīn al-Sādis wa-al-Sābi'', in *al-Rawḍatyn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn,* ed. by Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn, 5 vols (Beirut: Dār al- Kutub al-Ilmiya, 2002).

[431] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm.*

[432] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk.*

Kilij Arslān bin Mas'ūd Saljūq, the ruler of Konya, but after he fell in love with a singer *jāriyā*, he married her and neglected his first wife. That singer controlled his state and treasuries. When this news reached Kilij Arslān, he decided to attack Nūr al-Dīn and take his lands. Nūr al-Dīn requested help from Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who asked Kilij Arslān not to do this. Kilij Arslān replied, 'When Nūr al-Dīn married my daughter, I gave him several of my forts situated close to my lands, but because of what he did, I want him to return them to me.'[433]

The story is long, and Ibn Wāṣil explains that they sent envoys to each other in order to negotiate but they could not agree on anything. This increased Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's anger, so he signed a truce with the Crusaders and marched towards Kilij. The problem was finally solved when Kilij's messenger spoke to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.[434]

> My lord, that is not good for you. You are the greatest and the best sultan. If people hear that you have made peace with the Franks, suspended the invasion and the interests of the kingdom; abandoned everything: your citizens and all Muslims in general, collected soldiers from the outskirts of far and near lands, and squandered a great amount of money and an army, all because of a whore singer, what will be your excuse in front of God, the caliph, and the kings of Islam and the world? Do you think that no one will ask you about this? Do you realize this? Imagine that Kilij Arslān died, and his daughter sent me to you, crying and asking your help against her husband. If you help, that is what we think about you. If you do not, please do not strengthen this singer. Do you think it is good not to respond to her?[435]

The end of the story in *Mufarrij* reads, 'They agreed to let this singer stay with Nūr al-Dīn for one year; after that, if this did not happen [i.e., if she did not leave his household], the sultan [Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn] would not help him.'[436] This report by Ibn Wāṣil gives two impressions. One is that he uses this story to give advice to heads of state about

[433] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 2, pp. 96-97.

[434] Ibid, pp. 97-98.

[435] Ibid, p. 98.

[436] Ibid, pp. 97-98.

the serious danger posed by the *jawārī* and the results of their controlling their masters' hearts; the other is that he criticizes Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn for stopping his jihad in order to help Nūr al-Dīn. Ibn Wāṣil's apparent aim is to highlight his message that a politician should think wisely before doing anything could that might damage his reputation.

On the other hand, the *jawārī* could be used as tools to achieve certain goals by carrying out political plots, often without respecting their feelings. Ibn Wāṣil shows his sympathy with this category in two narrative reports. The first is about the *jāriyā* who was used by the Ismaili Shias.[437] They ensured that this *jāriyā* became pregnant by the last member of the Faṭimīd dynasty, in order to preserve the dynasty. When the Caliph al-ʻĀḍid (555-566/1160-1171) died, their state disappeared, so the wife of his son Dāwūd sent a *jāriyā* to her husband in his prison cell, in secret. He had sex with this *jāriyā*, and she became pregnant. Then she was taken to al-Ṣaʻīd in Egypt, where she gave birth to a son, Sulaymān.[438] Ibn Wāṣil's narration of this story reflects his opinion regarding the influence of the *jawārī* role that extended even into the political future. The *jāriyā* in this story had a very dangerous but pivotal role; she cooperated with a free woman to save the Faṭimīd line and thus ensure their political continuity.

The second report is about the *jawārī* who were used in a serious political plot to remove an oppressive ruler. Muʻizz al-Dīn Sanjar Shāh (d. 552/1157), the Governor of al-Jazīra in Iraq, was described in *Mufarrij* as follows:

> He was unjust, had a very bad reputation and the [cold] blood of an assassin. He did not refrain from any despicable deed, such as killing people cutting off tongues, noses, and ears, and shaving off beards. His oppression extended to his own children, neighbours, and wives…[439]

[437]Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij* , vol. 1, p. 210.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 188.

Mu‘izz al-Dīn’s tyranny reached his family, and according to Ibn Wāṣil, he imprisoned his own children. One son, Ghāzī, suffered from his father’s ill treatment and therefore decided to take revenge.

> Then Ghāzī climbed into his father’s house and hid himself with some of the concubines. Most of them knew about him, so they hid him because they [also] desired to get rid of the father. He [Ghāzī] waited in the house for several days. One day, his father was drinking and asked his singers to sing him poems about separation. He was crying as a person might when he senses that he is going to die. Then he went to his house, to some of his concubines. While he was with one of them—and he was drunk—his son was with the same concubine. Mu‘izz al-Dīn wanted to go to the toilet, and this gave his son Ghāzī a chance to attack him. The father was stabbed fourteen times and then killed. He left his father on the ground and went to the toilet. After that the son went to play with the *jawārī.*[440]

But this is not the end of the story, because the son made a mistake. In *Mufarrij*, there is a clear criticism of Ghāzī's behaviour:

> If he had gone to the soldiers and asked for their loyalty, he would have had control of his father’s throne, but he felt safe. Some young servants went out and told the *ustādh al-dār* [the ‘mayor of the palace’ and the one reponsible for the sultan’s expenses] of his father’s palace, who sent for the elites and told them the news. Then he closed the door on Ghāzī and asked for allegiance to Ghāzī's brother Mu‘izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Sinjr Shāh. When this happened, they opened the door, attacked Ghāzī and killed him, and then threw him out. The dogs ate some of his flesh, and after that his body was buried.[441]

Ibn Wāṣil shows that the *jawārī* were sometimes victims: ‘Mu‘izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd arrived and settled on his throne, and he arrested the *jawārī*. It is said that he took her and put her face in the fire to burn her, and then he threw her in the water to drown.’[442]

[440] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij,* p. 189.

[441] Ibid.

[442] Ibid.

From an Islamic point of view, this conduct from Ghāzī toward his father can be considered disobedience to parents. Ibn Wāṣil knew this teaching, as it is mentioned clearly in the Quran:

> Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and to your parents, [practise] kindness. If either or both of them attain old age while with you, do not rebuke them, but always speak gently to them and treat them with humility and tenderness, and say, ʻLord, be merciful to them both, as they raised me when I was little.ʼ [443]

Nevertheless, when he comments on this story, he does not insult Ghāzī. He criticizes him when he stayed with the *jawārī* to play with them instead of thinking of establishing his place on the throne. It might be that his aim in narrating this story is to illustrate the political impact of the *jawārī,* but he also may want to warn people against injustice, especially regarding the ruler and his family. Ibn Wāṣil in this story gives solid evidence that he evaluates political affairs mainly from a rational perspective and not from a religious one, as mentioned before.

Ibn Wāṣil highlights the danger of falling in love with the *jawārī,* and he does not forget to refer to the most far-reaching of *jawārī* tactics: conspiring to put their own sons on the throne. He tells the story of one of the wives of Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad, a *jāriyā* whose son was King al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II. In 626/876, when the sultan was away from Egypt, she sent him a letter complaining about his son by another wife, King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. At that time, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn was his father's designated successor to the crown and a delegate in Egypt. 'Umm al-'Ādil' (al-'Ādil's mother) wrote that al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn wanted to remove his own father from power and that he had bought many Turkish Mamluks, collected a huge amount of money from traders, and spent a great deal of money from the state treasury. Ibn Wāṣil reports: '[She wrote,] "If

[443] Q. 17: 23-24.

you do not come, he will take the state and will expel my son and me." When the king received this letter, he became furious.'[444] Ibn Wāṣil continues:

> When al-Kāmil arrived, he changed his behaviour towards his son. He arrested some of King al-Ṣāliḥ's friends and asked them for the money that had been given to them. This was the reason for sending King al-Ṣāliḥ to the east and appointing King al- 'Ādil Sayf al-Dīn Abī Bakr heir to the crown. Al-'Ādil at that time was eleven years old.[445]

Ibn Wāṣil usually tends to report about al-Kāmil Muḥammad in a positive light. He offers an excuse for him; for example, as mentioned previously, when the latter agreed to give the Crusaders Jerusalem.[446] He also considers the sultan to have been shrewd, comparing him to Mu'awiya bin Abī Sufyān.[447] The report in *Mufarrij* does not clearly indicate whether or not this *jāriyā* was lying, but Ibn Wāṣil interprets al-Kāmil Muḥammad's decision by remarking, 'King al-Kāmil had a strong inclination toward the child and his mother.'[448] This comment indicates that Ibn Wāṣil is against the sultan's reaction and his wife's letter. He also supports his claim by referring to her skills when he reports in another place in his text how al-Kāmil Muḥammad had got to know this woman. She had been working for a jurist named Naṣr, who sent some food to al-Kāmil Muḥammad. The sultan found it tasty and asked Naṣr the name of the *jāriyā* who cooked it, and then asked if he could obtain her. It is clear that, once she was in the sultan's service, this *jāriyā* then practised her skills with the aim of becoming his wife. At this point it is important to explain what would have happened to the *jāriyā* before she was sold. The appearance of the *jawārī* in the Islamic community gave rise to the need for dealers who specialized in *jawārī* trade**;** they operated under specific regulations and

[444] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 278.

[445] Ibid.

[446] Mallet, 'Islamic Historians of the Ayyubid Era', p. 242.

[447] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 155.

[448] Ibid, vol. 4, p. 278.

principles, and in specially designated markets in Baghdad.[449] The monetary value of *jawārī* differed according to their ethnic origins and socio-cultural status.[450] Whenever her cultural level rose, it meant that the *jāriyā* had a higher value. Therefore, traders who were interested in trafficking them gave the *jawārī* special attention by educating and teaching them so that they could attract powerful owners.[451] The *jāriyā's* value increased according to her advantages, such as the beauty of her face and voice, and high intelligence.[452] It seems that Umm al-'Ādil had followed the same procedure to be able to make a substantial impact on the Sultan. She also enjoyed some unique skills that gave her access to the sultan's heart.

Ibn Wāṣil, who was aware of the social and material conditions under which a *jāriyā* had to live and survive, does not criticize the deed of Umm al-'Ādil. It's quite possible that he understood the *jāriyā*'s psychological motivations. He knew that women in the *ḥarīm* experienced a life of marginalization, limited to bearing children, looking after them, and entertaining men; He would not have found it odd that when they gained authority by manipulating the ruler's mind, they would strive to cement this prominent position by putting their children in line for the crown.[453] This conduct was not surprising to Ibn Wāṣil; after all, al- al-Khayzurān, mother of the Abbasid Caliph al-Hādī (169-170/785-786), preferred her other son Hārūn al-Rashīd (193-170/809-786) because al-Hādī objected to his mother's intervention in governance.[454]

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[449] 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya*, p. 260; Mājid, *Ta'rīkh al-ḥaḍāra*, pp.126-127; Ḥasan, *Dawr jawārī wa al-qahramānāt*, p. 47.

[450] Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, p. 46.

[451] Athamina, 'Legal Status of Women', p. 391.

[452] al-Kurdī, *Dawr al-nisā' fī al-khilāfa*, p. 14.

[453] Marshall, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, pp. 143-144.

[454] Abbott. *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām***,** p. 104; 'Ashur, *Dirāsāt fī ta'rīkh al-ḥaḍāra*, p. 314, Al Rudainy, 'Women in the Būyid and Saljūq Periods', p. 16.

On the contrary, Ibn Wāṣil in this report blames the sultan. This might be because his main aim was to observe the sultan's manner in such cases and discuss what he should have done. He also implies that the sultan had made mistakes: first, he accepted his wife's complaint without carrying out any independent investigation. Second, he should have chosen the most capable person to be his successor. In Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of the son King al-'Ādil Abū Bakr II, 'He did not have a good, rigorous policy in order to control the soldiers. He preferred despicable people over good people.'[455] It seems that Ibn Wāṣil understood that a ruler who falls in love with his *jāriyā* can stop thinking wisely, lose control, and destroy everything.

The story of Umm al-'Ādil notwithstanding, Ibn Wāṣil emphasizes that not all the *jawārī* are bad models or have political aims. This can be found in his narration of the Khwārizmīan ruler and his *jāriyā*. Ibn Wāṣil asserts that when the bond of love is strong, the ruler was in the right to do his best to save his lover's life, even in the most difficult circumstances. The governor of Azerbaijan, Jalāl al-Dīn bin 'Alā' al-Dīn Khwārizm Shāh, was attacked by the Mongols in 628/1231, so he left his land to seek help from the caliph in Baghdad and other kings. While he was on his way, the Mongols defeated his military. Ibn Wāṣil writes:

> I was told that he had a concubine. He left his tent, gave her his horse, and asked some of his friends to take her to a safe place. Jalāl al-Dīn fled with a few of his friends. The Mongols looted the camp and killed its members, and the rest of the soldiers fled to the right and left and were torn to pieces.[456]

Although Jalāl al-Dīn was killed, Ibn Wāṣil reports on the concubine's subsequent fate, which means that he took the *jawārī* issue seriously:

[455] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 381.

[456] Ibid, vol. 4, p. 321.

> His concubine was sent by Jalāl al-Dīn with some of his friends. When they heard that Jalāl al-Dīn was missing and they were sure about him [his death], they took her to Baghdad, to Caliph al-Mustanṣir Billāh. She became one of the best of his [al-Mustanṣir Billāh's] concubines until she died during his reign.[457]

Ibn Wāṣil sheds light on his aim of reporting this story, 'She became one of the best of his [al-Mustanṣir Billāh's] concubines until she died during his reign .'[458] This report from Ibn Wāṣil reveals a positive side of the relationship with the *jawārī*. He gives a good example of the *jāriyā* who was brilliant in her survival skills, and remained close to the heart of Jalāl al-Dīn until his death and thereafter won the caliph's heart, it is assumed because she was honest and loyal in her conduct with them.

To sum up, Ibn Wāṣil shows a different attitude toward the *jawārī* in comparison with many early historians and modern scholars. He does not praise them, but neither does he criticize them. He tends to give a complete picture of this social rank from various aspects, taking into account their impact in the political arena. His belief is that this unique class usually played a critical role in the future of states, and that thus the ruler bears full responsibility for any political decision taken under the influence of any *jāriyā*, as this category was an essential part of medieval Muslim society that must not be ignored.

Ibn Wāṣil and the *Jawārī* in Power: Shajar al-Durr (648/1250), a case study

This section will deal with the life and role of Shajar al-Durr before her ascension to the throne. This part covers the life of Shajar al-Durr during her husband's reign,

[457] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 323.

[458] Ibid.

including her early life and her struggles to achieve power. The aim of this section is to discover, analyze, and discuss Ibn Wāṣil's attitude about her life during this period, in order to understand his final evaluation of her political activities, and to evaluate Ibn Wāṣil as a historian who might be described as a women's advocate. This aim can be achieved by investigating to what extent he made an effort to seek the truth about her story.

It is worth noting that Shajar al-Durr's story is at the end of *Mufarrij*, in the sixth volume according to the Maktaba al-'Aṣrīya edition. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this volume differs from the rest of Ibn Wāṣil's text in that while this part of the manuscript is written by him, his student 'Alī bin 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib made his own additions to the text. However, it is not too difficult to extract Ibn Wāṣil's point of view about Shajar al-Durr and her political role. This can be done by comparison between this volume and the earlier ones in terms of the methods used in reporting the incidents and the language and style of the reports.

Shajar al-Durr's role during her husband's time, based on Mufarrij

Shajar al-Durr's background according to Ibn Wāṣil

Old chronicles, such as Ibn Wāṣil, Ibn Taghrībirdī, al-Maqrīzī and others do not mention anything about Shajar al-Durr's childhood or how she arrived at the court of King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. They even disagree about her origin; al-Maqrīzī believes that she was either Turkish or Armenian, while Ibn Wāṣil and the archbishop Ibn al-'Ebrī (d. 685/1286) find that she was Turkish.[459] Everything that is mentioned about her early life is sketchy and without details. Her husband al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn had two wives, both of

[459] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 373, al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 459; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 201; Ghrīghūriyūs al-Malaṭī Ibn 'Ebrī, *Ta'rīkh mukhtāsar al-duwal* (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-'Arabī, 2001), p. 259.

whom were his *jawārī*; the other wife was Bint al-ʻĀlima.[460] However, Shajar al-Durr was closer to the king's heart, according to Ibn Taghrībirdī's statement:

> Queen Shajar al-Durr bint ʻAbd Allāh, the *jāriyā* of the Sultan and King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, his wife, and mother of his son Khalīl. She was close to him; she was in his company when he was in the Eastern lands during the lifetime of his father, then she accompanied him to Karak when he was imprisoned by King al-Naṣir Dāwd, the ruler of Karak, with her son Khalīl, too. And she experienced with al-Ṣāliḥ those terrors and tribulations. She came with him when he became Sultan of Egypt. Her son Khalīl survived [that imprisonment], but died when he was young. Her entourage is still unmatched in its greatness, and she was the controller of the majority of Egyptian lands throughout the life of her master the King al-Ṣāliḥ, during his illness, and after his death. […] She did not allow anyone to covet the kingship, [and this was] due to her influence on them.[461]

Al-Nuwayrī agrees with Ibn Taghrībirdī. He stresses the place of Shajar al-Durr in her husband's heart by including in his narration a letter hand-written by Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, addressed to his son al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh (Turanshah). It contains the father's advice to his son: tips and instructions that the son should follow in order to deal capably with political affairs.[462] It is noticeable that through his letter, he gave his son special recommendations regarding Shajar al-Durr. In brief, he admits in his letter her role in his life: 'she has many rights to be given to her in exchange for the services that she has provided, things that I cannot describe […] she has a great place in my heart […] consider her as your mother, and keep in touch with her.'[463]

Moreover, Ibn Wāṣil in a very short sentence implies his own estimation, 'King al-Ṣāliḥ loved her so much. When he was arrested, she was with him.'[464] In addition to the overt reference to the regard in which Shajar al-Durr was held by her husband, the

[460] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 83.

[461] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 6, p. 332.

[462] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ʻArab*, vol. 29, p. 220.

[463] Ibid, p. 221.

[464] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 201.

reference in this statement to the fact that she stood beside her husband even in very difficult times implies that he trusted her wisdom and judgement as much as her loyalty. Ibn al-'Ebrī remarks, 'She was Turkish, astute, and at a mature age, unmatched in beauty by other women.'[465] From the above statements, it can be surmised that Ibn Wāṣil, who was close to al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's court, knew that Shajar al-Durr was like any other *jāriyā* in history who had managed to exert a significant measure of control over her master's heart and mind: she must have had a unique personality, physical attractiveness, sharp intellect, and astuteness to be able to occupy her husband's heart and to be superior to her rival, the other wife. Moreover, as Levanoni points out, in addition to her intelligence, she had extensive experience in managing political affairs during her husband's reign.[466] If Ibn Wāṣil does not comment overtly on her physique or features of her personality as other historians have done, it is obvious that he kept his concerns focussed on the significance of her presence and activities in the political sphere.

But this leads to a question. Why is it that the early historians who deal with her life do not provide any information about her childhood or her life during her husband's time? In fact, as mentioned before, Ibn Wāṣil and other historians fail to do this. The only thing known about her is that she had a rival in her husband's lifetime, Bint al-'Ālima, as mentioned before. This other *jāriyā* was probably not interested in politics, or perhaps Bint al-'Ālima did not have as strong a personality as Shajar al-Durr, and thus was unable to compete with her, as there is no information about her, other than her name and that she married one of the sultan's Mamluks after his death.[467] As for Shajar al-Durr, for all that has been written about her, even her origin is not known accurately. The reason for this seems to be the way historians have dealt with information about slaves, and this is

[465] Ibn al-'Ebrī, *Ta'rīkh mukhtāsar al-duwal*, p. 259.

[466] Amalia Levanoni, 'The Mamluks', 137; Levanoni, 'Šağar ad-Durr', pp. 212- 215.

[467] Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 83.

usual, especially as far as female slaves were concerned. It was well known that slaves came primarily from certain regions, but chroniclers did not bother to record their early life stories. The facts mentioned about them in history are those that were evident, noticeable, or remarkable about them. A good example of this is that information only began to be reported about the Mamluk Sultan al-Muʻizz Aybak once he was appointed to help Shajar al-Durr in her political duties in 648/1250; nothing was indicated about his life before that point.[468]

Shajar al-Durr's struggle to achieve power during her husband's life according to Ibn Wāṣil

It is supposed that Shajar al-Durr had to strive to assume power. For instance, she had to face the other ambitious *jāriyā*, Umm al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II, who had caused the downfall of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. In fact, not one of the above-mentioned chronicles indicates the nature of Shajar al-Durr's relationship with the mother of al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II.[469] There are some signs mentioned by al-Nuwayrī. He indicates that Umm al-ʻĀdil expended significant effort to keep her son on the throne. For example, she prepared a huge feast, which she invited elites and the public to enjoy, when the king was arrested in Kerak in 637/1240 by his cousin al-Nāṣir Dāwūd.[470] What is more, she sent her messengers to King al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʻīl of Damascus to persuade him not to give any help to al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn.[471] Other than these sparse indicators about the relationship between these two women, this part of Shajar al-Durr's life is vague. What is certain is that both women experienced conflict, as each of them had high political ambitions.

[468] Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 132.

[469] See Chapter Three, 'The image of the Jawārī in *Mufarrij*'.

[470] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ʻArab*, vol. 29, p. 165.

[471] Ibid, pp. 168-169.

Abbott emphasizes that historians tend to deal with women's stories in summary, simply reporting the historical facts without analysis, which may explain why there is little information about this relationship.[472] It may also be that the silence of the Islamic sources was because the events were in the context of the *ḥarīm*, and the only men who were allowed to enter this realm, other than their husbands or masters, were eunuchs.[473] It is important to pause at this point to consider why, according to Islamic law, eunuchs were allowed to enter the *ḥarīm* section? The eunuch category of society had played a significant role in politics in various cultures, even before Islam. In the Byzantine Empire the eunuch Narses (d. 573) was one of the most famous generals of Emperor Justinian I; he managed to destroy the Gothic tribal realm after a long period of conflict with Byzantium.[474] Eunuchs were present in the Islamic social system during the Middle Ages. However, they would have already been castrated when they entered the society, as castration is forbidden by Islamic law.[475] Eunuchs also played a unique role in Muslim socio-politics, and are described by the early scholars as 'neither a man nor a woman'.[476] They were known to have both feminine and masculine features.[477] Since they were allowed to interact with women and view them unveiled, just as a father, brother, or son would, they were therefore allowed to work in the *ḥarīm* section in the palaces.[478]

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[472] Abbott**,** *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām,* ***p***. 95.

[473] Marshall, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 3, p. 143.

[474] William Gordon Holmes, *The Age of Justinian and Theodora: A History of the Sixth Century A.D.*, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (London: Bell, 1907), vol. 2, pp. 648-667; Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 3.

[475] *al-Mawsū'a al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 19, p. 120.

[476] Abī 'Uthmān 'Amr Ibn-Baḥr bin Maḥbūb al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (ed.), 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1964), vol. 2, p. 123.

[477] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, vol. 2, p. 123. Ībrāhīm bin Muḥammad al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa-al-masāwi'* (online: available at www.shamela.ws/browse.php/book-564/page-241 [Accessed 15 December 2018]).

[478] Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī,* vol. 12, p. 234.

Ibn Wāṣil does not mention any relationships involving eunuchs, despite the fact that such individuals would have been well informed and aware of many palace secrets that only they knew: eunuchs played a significant role in transferring news from or to women in the *ḥarīm*.[479] This omission in his text reflects the lack of interest by Ibn Wāṣil in the relationships between women behind the doors of the *ḥarīm*.

If he had given importance to eunuchs as a category, it would have been because they provided very crucial information; it might be that Ibn Wāṣil ignored them because he believed they could not be trusted, as they were commonly viewed as people who like gossip.[480] As mentioned earlier, Ibn Wāṣil was of the opinion that historians should report the stories they hear from trustworthy individuals; otherwise it is better to ignore a story, especially since the relationship between the two women was mainly 'behind the curtain'. An example of this kind of conflict between women inside the palace was when Zubaida, the wife of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, heard that he was greatly attracted to one of his *jawārī*: she gave him a number of other *jawārī* in order to prevent this individual *jāriyā* from gaining a high position with her husband.[481] Women in the palace competed with each other for access to the ruler's heart, as this would pave the way for them to influence the ruler's decision. As for the early historians, whether they were employed by the rulers or belonged to the *'ulamā'*, while they were forbidden access to the *ḥarīm*, they did have access to the male-only court, where they could see the ruler and observe his personality, manner, and reactions: such access was not available for females.[482]

[479] Maaike Van Berkel, Nadia El Cheikh, Hugh Kennedy, and Letizia Osti. *Crisis and Continuity at the Abbasid Court: Formal and Informal Politics in the Caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-32)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[480] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al- Jāḥiẓ* ,vol. 2, p, 124.

[481] Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām*, pp. 147-148.

[482] This point is discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

Considering the foregoing, it is worthwhile to shed light on the various political strategies practised by *jawārī*. Certainly, Shajar al-Durr used some of these tactics to intervene in political affairs. For instance, she might have used the time-honoured method of seduction, wherein women managed to access the political court as they became successful in political intrigues, and therefore they carried out or were used by third parties in acts of espionage. As mentioned above, mothers campaigned to have their offspring favoured by the ruler.[483]

It seems that when faced with highly skilled *jawārī*, rulers were often weak, and this led them to include such *jawārī* in political affairs. A case in point is the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī (158-168/775-785). Unlike his father, Caliph al-Manṣūr (136-158/754-775), al-Mahdī was famous for spending time with *jawārī*.[484] Al-Manṣūr advised his son not to let women share his secrets, but al-Mahdī ignored his father's advice and allowed his wife al-Khayzurān to practise politics with him.[485] The strong influence of al-Khayzurān extended to the reigns of her sons al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rashīd.[486] There were other powerful, well-known *jawārī* in Islamic history, such as Shaghab, the mother of al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-932).[487] In Spain, Ṣubḥ, the concubine of al-Ḥakam II (349-365/961-976), was another famous *jāriyā* who had an impact on the political scene.[488]

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[483] 'Abdul-Razzāq, *al-Ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya*, p. 262; Ḥasan, *Dawr al-jawārī wa al-qahramānāt,* p. 49; al-Kurdī, *Dawr al-nisā' fī al-khilāfa*, p. 16.

[484] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munjid, *Bayna al-khulafā' wa-al-khul'ā' fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī,* 2nd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1974), p. 9.

[485] al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul*, vol. 8, p. 205; Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām* **,** p. 29: Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (London : Croom Helm, 1981), p. 111.

[486] al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul* , vol. 8, p. 206; al-Kurdī, *Dawr al-nisā' fī al-khilāfa*, p. 16; Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām,* p. 121.

[487] al-Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-al-ishrāf* , pp. 326-329; El Cheikh, 'Gender and Politics', p. 154;'Alī Ībrāhīm Ḥasan, *al-Ta'rīkh al-islāmī al-'āmm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, n.d.), p. 434; Sāra Muḥammad al-Khathlān, *al-Mar'a wa al-siyāsa* (Riyadh: Maktabat Obeikan, 2007), p. 56.

[488] Mourtaḍa and Gully, 'Political Role of Women in al-Andalus', 191;Ibrāhīm Bayḍūn, *al-Dawla al-'arabīya fī Isbānyā min al-fatḥ ḥattā suqūṭ al-khilāfa 1031-711/422-92* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-'Arabīya, 1980), p. 342.

Shajar al-Durr's son died when he was a child, but that did not end her dream of practicing politics. It is expected that she followed this method. The *jāriyā* who became queen will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another form of political involvement by the *jawārī* was playing the role of mediator among authorities.[489] An example of this was Ḥabbāba, the *jāriyā* beloved of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II; she helped Ibn Hubayra to gain a high position in the government.[490] *Jawārī* could also be used by others for the same goal, usually presented as gifts. For instance, Ibn Ṭāhir, the guardian of Khorasan, gave the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh a present which included about two hundred *jawārī.* Third, deep involvement on the part of some *jawārī* led them to plot to remove the ruler from his throne, as when Umm Mūsā wanted to help her relative Aḥmad bin al-'Abbās succeed his cousin al-Muqtadir as caliph in 310/922.[491]

The foregoing has explained the various functions of the *jawārī* in the palaces of the caliphs, sultans, and other rulers. These roles were carried out, often in secret, inside the palaces, and this arrangement was similar in palaces around the Muslim world during the medieval era. Of course, this happened in the Ayyubid courts as well. It should be remembered that nothing is known about Ibn Wāṣil's personal life: his own mother or his wife might have been from this class, or he may have kept a number of *jawārī* in his own home. He was raised in a society in which a large proportion of its population were of this category. He was not far from them; he knew a lot about them. All the social norms and

[489] al-Munjid, *Bayna al-khulafā' wa-al-khul'ā'*, p. 13.

[490] Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Balāḏurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāḍ al-Ziriklī (eds.), 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), vol. 8, p. 268; Athamina, 'Legal Status of Women', 406; al-Kurdī, *Dawr al-nisā' fī al-khilāfa al-'Abbāsīya*, p. 21.

[491] 'Arīb ibn Sa'd al-Qurṭubī, Ṣilat Ta'rīkh al-Ṭabarī, in *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk* by al-Ṭabarī, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2nd edn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1976), vol. 11, p. 95; Athamina, 'Legal Status of Women', 407; Maaike van Berkel, Nadia El Cheikh, Hugh Kennedy, and Letizia Osti, *Crisis and Continuity at the Abbasid Court: Formal and Informal Politics in the Caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-32)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 177.

ideas regarding the *jawārī* undoubtedly affected his evaluation of the political role of the *jawārī*, as will be seen later.

Based on what was said by some historians about Shajar al-Durr's impact on her husband, it is certain that Ibn Wāṣil knew that she played a great role in influencing him to remain steadfast in front of the obstacles that he faced from his rivals, including other Ayyubid kings, when they conspired against him.[492] She must have felt his pain when he was abandoned by his allies and when he was arrested and captured by King al-Naṣir Dāwūd.[493] What is more, during his period in prison, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn was obviously concerned about Shajar al-Durr because he had her transferred to Egypt.[494] It is probable that Ibn Wāṣil believed that she played a role in this decision; she may also have used her ingenuity to introduce his rule to Egypt and to connect with loyal people who helped him.

The opportunity came for her to take revenge on her arch-rival Umm al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II, who had caused all of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's troubles. This happened when King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn arrested his half-brother al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II and confiscated the latter mother's property.[495] Shajar al-Durr must have enjoyed moments of victory and joy when the king was able to unite Egypt and Syria under his control and became the great sultan of the Ayyubid dynasty, as mentioned before.[496] Unlike the case of other monarchs whose love interests were from the *jawārī* class, her high place in her husband's heart did not negatively affect his reputation. Ibn Wāṣil asserts that the king's personality was strong, and he had a high level of prestige.[497] This might have affected her presence in his court, the degree of her interference, and her participation in political decision-making. It

[492] ʻĀshūr, *Miṣr wa-al-Shām*, p. 117.

[493] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 300; Levanoni, 'The Mamluks', 123.

[494] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, pp. 239-240.

[495] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 262; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ʻArab*, vol. 29, p. 174.

[496] ʻĀshūr, *Miṣr wa-al-Shām*, p. 118.

[497] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 82.

seems that her function was limited to moral support and consultation; nevertheless, this role was crucial and cannot be underestimated. Other examples exist throughout history of wives of powerful men whose moral support had considerable influence on their husbands. For instance, the Byzantine emperor Justinian the Great (527-565) faced a very dangerous revolution in 532 called the Nika riots. The protesters united against him, and he considered escaping, but eventually he decided to stay to defeat them, with strong support from his wife Theodora.[498] Just as Theodora was able to push her husband to success in facing his opponents, it is clear that Shajar al-Durr played a similar role in her husband's life until he became one of the greatest kings in the late Ayyubid dynasty.

Nonetheless, Ibn Wāṣil does not mention a significant role for Shajar al-Durr during her husband's life. It might be that he was convinced that the sultan's high prestige and great prowess as sultan was completely independent of his wife's influence on him. It may be that Ibn Wāṣil's personal admiration of the sultan made him biased in his view of him, so he ignores the role of Shajar al-Durr. It is more likely, however, that there is a gap in the information about Shajar al-Durr; as *jawārī* were usually present in large numbers in the palaces, historians just report the stories of remarkable individuals, concerning the significance of their role in politics.

Shajar al-Durr's role after her husband's death, based on *Mufarrij*

It is important to reveal how Ibn Wāṣil and other early historians depict the remarkable role of Shajar al-Durr during her husband's death, and whether or not they appreciate it. This section focuses on a number of questions: What did Ibn Wāṣil know about the role of Shajar al-Durr during her husband's death when he was facing his old

[498] Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr, *Ūrubbā: al-'uṣūr al-wusṭā*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Angelo al-Miṣrīya, 1986), vol. 1, p. 111; Rafa't 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *al-Imbirāṭūrīya al-Bīzanṭīya: al-'aqīda wa al-siyāsa* (Cairo: Dār Qibā' lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2000), p. 164. For more information about the empress' atitude toward the revolution see Evans, *The Empress Theodora*, pp. 40-47.

enemies, the Crusaders? To what extent does he appreciate her presence on the political scene at that time in leading the Muslims against their rivals? Does he think that her intention was to become queen, or not?

All these questions will be answered through Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of her actions and comparing it to the treatment of this topic by other historians.

Ibn Wāṣil's view of the actions of Shajar al-Durr upon her husband's death

When the Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb died (in 648/1250), Shajar al-Durr played a vital role. Some of the earlier historians such as al-Nuwayrī avoided referring to this at all, and few mention it as clearly as Ibn Wāṣil does.[499] The former attitude can be interpreted by Viguera's statement about historians' disregard for the role of women in the court:

> We knew very little of them beyond their names unless some extraordinary circumstance attaches to them: if, for example, one of these court women played a leading part in crucial events on the political scene, perhaps through significant influence over her husband's actions…[500]

With respect to Shajar al-Durr, Ibn Wāṣil shows restraint in depicting her career. In contrast to other historians, Ibn Wāṣil was an eyewitness; he lived during the Seventh Crusade campaign of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's era and of course heard about Shajar al-Durr. Ibn Wāṣil also tries to interpret why she took this action and what her aims were:

> When Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn died at this difficult time, Shajar al-Durr's opinion was that the person who would be best able to collect the soldiers to face this matter was Prince Fakhr al-Dīn. She agreed with al-Ṭawāshī Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin that he [al-Ṭawāshī] was the closest of the Sultan's servants to him, and he was responsible for the Jamdārī and Bahrī Mamluks. They became a huge crowd and a strong force. They called Prince Fakhr al-Dīn bin al-Shaykh and told him about the Sultan's death. They agreed to keep this news secret from everyone else in order to prevent the Crusaders from knowing about it, so that they would not attack, since the Muslims might not be able to face them because there was no leader to lead them. They also agreed to seek pledges of loyalty from the army and the governors of the

[499] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Arab*, vol. 29, p. 218; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 101.

[500] Viguera, 'Andalusī Women', p. 716.

> lands to Sultan Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, and after him, to his son King al-Muʿaẓẓam Ghayath al-Dīn Tūrān Shāh, and to Fakhr al-Dīn in leading the military and organizing the affairs of the kingdom.[501]

In comparison with other historians, Ibn Wāṣil describes in detail how Shajar al-Durr and her helpers dealt with the Sultan's death, keeping everything concealed so as to achieve her main aim: to save the state. He reports:

> The sultan had asked the prince Ḥusām al-Dīn to come to him. When Ḥusām al-Dīn arrived, the sultan was close to death. When it happened, they commenced to wash and shroud the sultan's body, and to pray for him. This was in order that people should not doubt that Ḥusām al-Dīn himself had come, and not someone else in his place. So Fatḥ al-Dīn entered, and washed him, shrouded him, and prayed for him. The sultan was placed in a coffin and then secretly transferred by ship to the island fortress, where he was left until he was moved to Cairo.[502]

Ibn Wāṣil continues to explain this difficult time and how they kept control of their feelings. They dealt with this issue carefully and took care of minute details.

> Then a letter was sent to Cairo, to Prince Ḥusām al-Dīn. He was told that it was a letter from the sultan. Among the lines there was the well-known signature of the sultan, that is, 'Ayyūb bin Muhammad bin Abī Bakr bin Ayyūb'; the person who wrote it was one of the sultan's servants called al-Suhailī, who is still alive, whose handwriting was similar to the Sultan's. The letter demanded loyalty to the sultan, that his son should take the crown, and that Fakhr al-Dīn should be the chief atabeg. All deputies and governmental figures must swear their loyalty, and the preachers should pray for the sultan and for his son King al-Muʿaẓẓam.[503]

Ibn Wāṣil was aware of the vital work Shajar al-Durr did in concealing her husband's death during the conflict between the Muslim military and their Crusader counterparts. He agrees that she took very important actions in dealing with the political turmoil from which the Muslim state suffered at the time. It is known that Muslims were

[501] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 101.

[502] Ibid, p. 102.

[503] Ibid.

under relentless attack by the Crusaders. There is no doubt that the death of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn was a great tragedy and loss for all Muslims; the majority of chroniclers, especially Ibn Wāṣil and al-Nuwayrī, considered al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn to be the greatest of the Ayyubid sultans after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.[504] Moreover, the period between a king's death and the ascension of the next king to the throne is a very crucial and sensitive one which could become a time of turbulence, thus the authorities hasten to transfer the throne to the new king smoothly and quickly.[505] The situation is even more precarious if the monarch had not appointed a successor, as was the case with al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. Ibn Wāṣil understood this critical time; he appreciated the importance of Shajar al-Durr's role in keeping the throne safe. According to his depiction, she not only kept the sultan's death secret for three months, but she also took direct action to continue the war between the Muslims and the Crusaders without any interruption, so that the Muslims' morale would not be adversely affected. At the same time, she ordered al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, the son of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, to become the new king. She also shared this responsibility with the men in power, all of which seems to be evidence of the intelligence of Shajar al-Durr and the group who worked with her. Ibn Wāṣil was apparently impressed with the way that they dealt with the matter, especially regarding the letters that they issued. This might be why his account of this episode explains everything in detail.

Since Ibn Wāṣil was a contemporary, he played an indirect role in these political events. According to him, he was one of the few people who knew about the sultan's poor health and his subsequent death; he received this information directly from the sons of the

[504] Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 82; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ʻArab*, vol. 29, p. 218.

[505] Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām*, p. 91.

sultan's physician.[506] Moreover, he was very close to the prince Ḥusām al-Dīn bin 'Alī al-Hadhbānī, who trusted him and showed him the forged letter purportedly from the sultan's hand that was issued by Shajar al-Durr and her supporters, as mentioned above. Ibn Wāṣil's intelligence is highlighted at the point when he discovers this fake document and explains that there is very little difference between the sultan's handwriting and that of al-Suhailī; he gives an example of the way the Arabic letter *bā'* is drawn.[507] In contrast, Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, also a contemporary historian, claims inaccurately that Shajar al-Durr knew the sultan's handwriting and that she was the person who had written the letter in question.[508] Abū Shāma, another contemporary historian, does not write anything at all about Shajar al-Durr, ignoring her effort completely.[509]

Āl-Sa'ūd, in his article '*Waṣīyat al-malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn ilā ibnihi Tūrān Shāh*', makes a critical study of this letter.[510] The only chronicler who includes this letter in his history is al-Nuwayrī. The historian worked in the *dīwān* (chancellery) and found the letter in the archives; he confirms that the letter is in al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's handwriting.[511] Āl-Sa'ūd concludes from his examination that al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn could have written a short version, but he stresses that many commandments had been added by certain people who were greedy for power, and that Shajar al-Durr was one of them.[512]

As stated above, Ibn Wāṣil discovers the fraud in the letter, but he does not speculate about who could have done this. It is clear that he examined the letter, but it is

[506] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 103.

[507] Ibid.

[508] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 409.

[509] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatyn*.

[510] Turkī Fahd Āl-Sa'ūd, 'Waṣīyat al-malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn ilā ibnihi Tūrān Shāh', Dirāsa naqdīya, *al-Dāra*, 3 (42) (Riyadh: Dārat al-Malik Abd al-'Azīz, 2016), pp. 132-160 (p. 138).

[511] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Arab*, vol. 29, p. 218.

[512] For more information about Āl-Sa'ūd's reason for accusing Shajar al-Durr and others, see his 'Waṣīyat al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn', 141-146.

not known why he read the letter, or why he merely points out that the letter is forged. It could be said that this behaviour from Ibn Wāṣil shows his desire to seek the truth. However, there is another hidden reason that made him treat this issue as he does in *Mufarrij*. By examining the content of the letter it can be noticed that the sultan advised his son to give great respect to Shajar al-Durr and Fakhr al-Dīn, while saying nothing about Ḥusām al-Dīn: he is ignored. The historian was a close friend to Ḥusām al-Dīn and close to al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's court and he knew the nature of the relationship between the sultan and his two statesmen. He was sure that the sultan had preferred Ḥusām al-Dīn. Ibn Wāṣil used his intelligence to give logical evidence by comparing the handwriting of the letter with that of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, to lead the reader to conclude the truth without any overt influence from the chronicler. In a clever way, he speculates about who the sultan might have chosen as a successor if he had realized the severity of his illness. He found that the choices would have been limited to two important men: Ḥusām al-Dīn and Fakhr al-Dīn. In a long passage, he explains in a logical manner why he thought that the sultan would have chosen Ḥusām al-Dīn over Fakhr al-Dīn. Ibn Wāṣil was close enough to the sultan to understand the ruler's desire; the historian knew which of the two was the closest to the sultan's heart; in his view, the Sultan would not have chosen Fakhr al-Dīn because he knew that the latter was highly ambitious.[513] Ibn Wāṣil emphasizes that choosing al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh was according to the wishes of Shajar al-Durr and al-Ṭawāshī (eunuch) Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin, but Fakhr al-Dīn agreed with them simply because he could do nothing about it.[514]

Ibn Wāṣil seems to appreciate the personal power of Shajar al-Durr. He himself was as strongly affected as any other Muslim by the news of the sultan's death. Shajar al-

[513] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 103.

[514] Ibid, p. 104.

Durr, who had shared the sultan's life, was able to hide her sense of loss at that time, even though the death of her husband is one of the most emotionally and socially difficult times for any woman. Although Ibn Wāṣil's book is very detailed in general, and he could well be the best historian of this period, he does not expound upon the strong link between Shajar al-Durr and her husband. He assumes that he knew the extent to which she was close to the sultan's heart, as indicated before. It might be his view that she had ignored and managed to overcome her feelings for the sake of the Muslims and to keep busy in preparation for jihad.

Modern historians concur with Ibn Wāṣil that Shajar al-Durr concealed her husband's death at a time when the Crusaders were attacking Egypt in the Seventh Crusade in 647/1249.[515] They also support his assertion that she kept silent because news of the sultan's demise would have negatively affected the morale of the Islamic army.[516] It seems that the sultan had dealt with state affairs, not personally but through his courtiers, with everything under the eyes of Shajar al-Durr,[517] and this helped her to make it appear as though everything was normal after his death.[518] It is probable that until her husband's death, she was hesitant to break the boundaries of the *harīm*. The evidence of this was when she facilitated al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh to succeed his father as sultan at this very difficult time.[519] As mentioned, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn had not made his wishes known regarding his successor. He had three sons, but two of them died during his lifetime,[520]

[515] James M. Ludlow, *The Age of the Crusades* (New York: Scribner, 1896), p. 343; Helen J. Nicholson, *The Crusades* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), pp. 123-124; Peter Jackson, *The Seventh Crusade, 1244-1254: Sources and Documents* [Crusades texts in translation] (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p. 136.

[516] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 101; ʻĀshūr, *Miṣr wa-al-Shām,* p.132; Muḥammad Suhayl Ṭaqqūsh, *Tạ'rīkh al-Mamālīk fī Miṣr wa-bilād al-Shām, 648-923/1250-1517* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1997), p. 31; Jackson, *The Seventh Crusade*, p. 139.

[517] Levanoni, 'The Mamluks', 129.

[518] Levanoni, 'Šağar ad-Durr', p. 212; Nicholson, *The Crusades*, p. 125.

[519] Nicholson, *The Crusades*, p. 125.

[520] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 443.

and he did not consider the only remaining son, al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, capable of ruling. Therefore, the sultan advised his deputy, Ḥusām al-Dīn bin Abī ʿAlī, to leave the decision of choosing the new sultan to the Abbasid caliph:

> Do not ask Tūrān Shāh to come from Hasankeyf. Do not appoint him. I know nothing good could come from him. Do not give the state's affairs to any of my relations. Delegate the matter to the caliph to choose whom he will.[521]

Having reported the sultan's instruction to his deputy, it might be Ibn Wāṣil's view that the sultan's crucial decision proved that he could ignore a father's emotions and act instead in the interest of the Muslims to select an efficient candidate. This conduct was in stark contrast to the conduct of Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad, whose actions were governed by his paternal instincts regarding his son al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr II. It is expected that this decision from al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn was one of the reasons that influenced Ibn Wāṣil's great respect for him, whereas the chronicler criticizes al-Kāmil Muḥammad sharply, as mentioned before.[522] At the same time, the poor relationships between al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn and the other Ayyubid kings caused him to ignore their concerns, even if this would lead to the demise of the Ayyubid state. In this light, Shajar al-Durr's decision to select al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh as his father's heir can be appreciated. However, Tūrān Shāh's political performance was weak. He did not respect Shajar al-Durr's efforts, his father's Mamluks, or the interests of the Muslims.[523] In fact, he began to annoy and ignore everyone, and as a result, he was assassinated two months after ascending the throne.[524] These events proved that Shajar al-Durr was politically more effective than al-

[521] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 100.

[522] See Chapter Three, 'The image of the Jawārī in *Mufarrij*'.

[523] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 444.

[524] al-ʿAynī, *'Iqd al-jumān fī ta'rīkh ahl al-zamān, 'aṣr salāṭīn al-Mamālīk,* vol. 1, p. 29.

Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh; as mentioned earlier, in her role as al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's consort, she had gained considerable political experience during his reign.[525]

Shajar al-Durr an innocent woman according to Ibn Wāṣil

Ibn Wāṣil's presentation of this period is characterized by reservation when writing his biography of Shajar al-Durr. He avoids mentioning certain information that could clearly harm her reputation, and he gives no suggestion in *Mufarrij* that Shajar al-Durr had any role in the killing of the king, al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh. In contrast, Ibn al-Dawādārī, who is against Shajar al-Durr's political involvement, stresses her role. In his account, al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh sent word to her, threatening her and asking for money and jewels. She was afraid of him, so she sent for the princes in order to incite them to kill him.[526]Al-Maqrīzī confirms al-Dawādārī's attitude about Shajar al-Durr, explaining that although the Mamluks were unhappy with al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh's policies, it was her message that convinced them to adopt a decisive stance toward him:

> She sent word to the Mamluks to tell them what she had done for him in terms of paving the path to the throne for him, managing matters until he came, and handing over the kingdom, and then [she described] what he had done to her by threatening her and demanding things that she did not have. They [the Mamluks] were angered for her sake and resented his actions. Also, Sultan al-Muʿaẓẓam had promised the knight Aqṭāī that he would make him a prince of one of the states. This was when [Aqṭāī] had gone to the sultan when he [al-Muʿaẓẓam] was in Hasankeyf, but the sultan did not fulfil his promise. Aqṭāī was angry but he did not take action until the letter from Shajar al-Durr moved him.[527]

Al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451) held the same view; even Ibn Taghrībirdī, who respected Shajar al-Durr highly, had the same attitude. She had an influence on the Mamluks and she encouraged them to kill al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh.[528] Ibn Wāṣil's point of view is in

[525] Levanoni, 'The Mamluks', 137; Levanoni, 'Šağar ad-Durr', pp. 212- 215.

[526] al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar* ,vol. 7, p. 384.

[527] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 458.

[528] al-ʿAynī, *'Iqd al-jumān*, vol. 1, p. 24; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 7, p. 373.

contrast with that of these historians. In his opinion, the reason for killing al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh was his harmful political behaviour, which had led to his failure in the management of the state since the beginning of his reign.

> He was a virtuous man involved in many of the sciences and literature, but his luck was bad […] however, he was unstable and frivolous, and his behaviour with his father's Mamluks did not improve. This resulted in his death. […] Every [one's destiny] is determined by God, but God has a plan…[529]

Ibn Wāṣil, as is his habit, sets out the rationale for his opinion, explaining the kinds of mistakes made by al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh. As the sultan, he wanted to control everything from the beginning, even before he had a firm grip on the reins, whereas his father had done things gradually, over a long period of time.[530] In *Mufarrij* there is a list of the factors that Ibn Wāṣil believes were the main cause of al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh's killing,[531] and he adds, 'And other rumours abounded.'[532] This indicates that in his view, the accusations about Shajar al-Durr were rumours, and that she was innocent of what was attributed to her by other historians. In Ibn Wāṣil's view, al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh deserved what happened to him, having brought death upon himself through his flawed judgement and actions. In fact, Ibn Wāṣil's account is probably the most likely version among all existing accounts by historians, first because he was an eyewitness, and second because he had an excellent relationship with al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, as mentioned earlier. Thus, there is no apparent factor that would have encouraged him to disregard Shajar al-Durr.

[529]Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 131.

[530] Ibid, pp. 127-128.

[531] For more on Ibn Wāṣil's analysis of the assassination of al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh see *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 127-128.

[532] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 128.

Ibn Wāṣil goes on to cite strong examples to support his position. He refers to the prince Jamāl al-Dīn Āqūsh al-Najaībī, one of al-Saliḥ Najm al-Dīn's men, who had a strong premonition. He told Ibn Wāṣil:

> You have to know that what happened to his uncle must happen to this boy – the King al-Muʿaẓẓam.[533] What is inferred from his condition and what actions he adopted are similar to what happened to his uncle. He will not continue to live.[534]

Another example in *Mufarrij* concerns al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, who ignored his parental feelings as he was not content to let al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh be his successor. Ibn Wāṣil stresses this, saying:

> King al-Ṣāliḥ loved King al-Mughīth (his other son) well. He resembles his father in mind and magnanimity. He was nominated by his father to be the crown prince. He [al-Ṣāliḥ] strongly disliked King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh.[535]

Mufarrij also includes many indications of indiscretion on the part of al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, demonstrating that he was not capable of being the leader of the Muslims at that difficult time. Ibn Wāṣil's text contains a simple comparison between al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh and Shajar al-Durr; it makes her wisdom and good management extremely obvious. As a specialist in logic, Ibn Wāṣil usually practises rational thinking, conducting a rational study of the political position of the Ayyūbīd dynasty and assessment of the threat to Muslims at that time. This approach makes Ibn Wāṣil less severe in condemning the rule of women. First, he does not explicitly criticize such rule, as he does with some of the failures of the Ayyūbīd kings who acted foolishly during their reigns. The best example of this is when Ibn Wāṣil openly criticizes King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh and his policies that led to his assassination; another strong example

[533] The uncle mentioned in this passage is the sultan al-'Adil bin al-Kamil, indicated previously.

[534] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol, 6, p. 127.

[535] Ibid, p. 100.

(mentioned earlier) is that of King al-Afḍal bin Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who abandoned state affairs and relied on his minister Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, who in turn caused many problems for his master, including being stripped of his kingdom. Second, compared to other historians, Ibn Wāṣil presents his history in a more realistic and rational manner: he excludes the mention of information that may fall within the framework of rumours. Furthermore, his depiction seems more reliable because, unlike other historians, he was close to the events and had the advantage of access to first-hand and eyewitness accounts.

Shajar al-Durr and jihad according to Ibn Wāṣil

According to *Mufarrij* there is no obvious connection between Shajar al-Durr and the struggle against the invading Crusaders. After the death of al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, Muslims once again had to face the Crusaders in order to save their lands. Neither Ibn Wāṣil nor other contemporary historians mention any role played by Shajar al-Durr in that jihad. They report that the main reaction to the Crusaders was initiated by Fakhr al-Dīn. Ibn Wāṣil comments:

> A letter arrived from Prince Fakhr al-Dīn to warn all people and instruct them to go for jihad for the sake of God […]. It was read in front of Muslims from the pulpit in the mosque of congregational prayer in Cairo. Everyone cried and was unhappy. A great number of people came from Cairo, [the rest of] Egypt, and the other lands, and fear increased because of the death of the sultan.[536]

According to *Mufarrij*, Fakhr al-Dīn, the chief leader, was the person who called for jihad, and the majority of Muslims responded. However, the role of Fakhr al-Dīn was limited because he was killed at the beginning of the war.[537] This explains why Ibn Wāṣil, when describing later actions against the Crusaders, usually refers to 'Muslims' without

[536] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 107.

[537] Ludlow, *The Age of the Crusades*, p. 345.

naming any specific leader, especially after Fakhr al-Dīn's death. For example, he writes, 'A great battle between the Crusaders and Muslims took place', or, 'The Turkish group of the Sultan's Jamdārī and Baḥrī Mamluks attacked the Crusaders.'[538]

A brief description of the political atmosphere is helpful in understand the political situation of Muslims at that time. The Crusaders came from Europe with the French king Louis IX (623-668/1226-1270), and they endured many difficulties.[539] But in the death of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, the sultan and military commander of the Muslims found an opportunity to achieve victories that would be immortalized in history.[540] They controlled Damietta already, so their main aim was to capture Egypt, and they began advancing from Damietta to achieve this.[541] The Muslims felt panic and wanted to fiercely defend Egypt because of its importance to Islam and Muslims. The Ayyūbīd kings joined forces with the Mamluks to confront the Crusaders.[542]

This could illustrate why Ibn Wāṣil and other historians do not mention any leading figure that could lead the military armies and develop military plans. This volatile situation prevailed for all Muslims, and they only had stability after King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh came on the scene. When he arrived, he provided moral support to the Muslims.[543] Ibn Taghrībirdī stated, 'The Muslims were optimistic because of his

[538] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 107 & 112.

[539] Joinville, *The Memoirs of the Lord of Joinville*, trans. Ethel Wedgwood, <http://www.indiana.edu/~dmdhist/joinville.htm> [accessed 5 October 2018]; Ludlow, *The Age of the Crusades*, p. 338; Jackson, *The Seventh Crusade*, p.63; Joseph Nasīm Yūsuf, *Hazīmat Luwīs al-Tāsiʿ ʿalā ḍifāf al-Nīl* (Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Maṭbūʿāt al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), pp. 5-11; Farīd Waḥīd Ṣaydam, '*Jihād al-sulṭān al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb wa juhūduhu fī tawḥīd Miṣr wa al-Shām* (638-647/1240-1249)', unpublished MA dissertation, Islamic University of Gaza (2010), p. 122.

[540] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 408; 'Āshūr, *Miṣr wa-al-Shām,* p. 130; Yūsuf, *Hazīmat Luwīs al-Tāsiʿ* pp. 17-18.

[541] Joinville, *The Memoirs of the Lord of Joinville*; Ludlow, *The Age of the Crusades*, pp. 338-343; Jackson, *The Seventh Crusade*, p.69.

[542] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 323.

[543] Jackson, *The Seventh Crusade*, p. 72; Ṣaydam, '*Jihād al-Sulṭān al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb*', p. 138.

arrival.'[544] Some modern scholars tend to attribute the victories that were achieved by the Muslims to al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh: ʿĀshūr indicates that the king played an effective role in fighting the Crusaders since he had built a navy that played a significant role in the conflict.[545] ʿĀshūr and other modern scholars ignored what was said by early historians about his recklessness. For example, according to Ibn Wāṣil, al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh was not the best sultan to face the Crusaders. Although he devoted time to fight them, he did not forget to give his attention to gathering the *'ulamā'.* Ibn Wāṣil was one of them. As a result of this good relationship with the sultan, Ibn Wāṣil wrote his history, *al-Tāʾrīkh al-ṣāliḥī*, as a gift to al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, as mentioned previously.[546] However, he comments:

> He [al-Muʿaẓẓam] marched with the army to face the Crusaders; he surprised them and trapped them in the place where they had camped. A dining table was provided for the public every day; princes and senior members of the court attended to it. He also presented a group of *'ulamā'* to the military.[547]

As stated formerly, even though the sultan treated him with a great deal of respect, Ibn Wāṣil does not let this influence him, and he still criticizes the sultan for his mistakes. When al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh arrested King Louis IX,[548] Ibn Wāṣil criticizes the sultan again, saying:

> King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh relaxed and did not take Damietta. If he had gone quickly and demanded it from King Louis, who was in his grip, this could have happened at once, but he sat there because he was a bad manager.[549]

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[544] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 364.

[545] ʿĀshūr*, Miṣr wa-al-Shām,* p. 135.

[546] See Chapter Two, 'The value of *Mufarrij*'.

[547] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 119.

[548] Ludlow, *The Age of the Crusades*, p. 352; George Procter, *History of the Crusades: Comprising the Rise, Progress and Results of the Various Extraordinary European Expeditions for the Recovery of the Holy Land from the Saracens and Turks* (Philadelphia: Keystone, 1889), pp. 414- 415.

[549] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 127.

This attitude in *Mufarrij* proves that Ibn Wāṣil's analysis is not affected by his personal relationships with the Ayyubid rulers. His assessment is based on the ruler's political behaviour, for his loyalty is not to any particular ruler but to the whole dynasty, as mentioned before.[550]

In *Mufarrij*, there is an assertion that Shajar al-Durr had no role even after she became queen, based on the fact that the person who went to negotiate with the French king was Ḥusām al-Dīn bin ʻAlī al-Hadhbānī, who had been chosen by a group of Mamluks because they trusted him.[551] The question that should be asked here is why Shajar al-Durr is not referred to in this part of the text, and the answer can be found in Islamic law: she could not command the army because this was the sultan's duty.[552] Presumably, the historian knew that she had some knowledge of how to deal with the Mamluk leaders and their military situations; she would have gained this experience in the company of her husband, who had spent most of his life in the military domain. It is improbable that Shajar al-Durr had no role in the recapture of Damietta from the Crusaders. At the very least, she approved of and chose Ḥusām al-Dīn. Additionally, Nicholson reports, '…Shajar negotiated with the captive King Louis IX and with his wife, Queen Margaret…'[553] This statement implies that Shajar al-Durr played a crucial role on behalf of Muslims vis-à-vis the Crusaders, and it emphasizes that coming from the *ḥarīm* did not prevent a woman from wielding her power.

Indeed, it is difficult to make a specific assessment about Ibn Wāṣil's view, as it is hard to follow his evaluation regarding this point. As indicated before, this section was probably written by both Ibn Wāṣil and his student ʻAlī bin ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib.

[550] See Chapter Two, 'The content of *Mufarrij*'.

[551] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p, 133; Procter, *History of the Crusades*, p. 417.

[552] Dundul Jabr, *al-Mar'a al-wilāyāt al-'āmma fī al-siyāsa al-shar'īya* (Amman: Dār Ammar, 1999), p. 68.

[553] Nicholson, *The Crusades*, p. 125.

More precisely, it seems that the beginning was written by Ibn Wāṣil and the rest completed by his student. When Ḥusām al-Dīn met the French king, he shared with Ibn Wāṣil his opinion of the king, and the dialogue between them was reported in *Mufarrij*. ʻAlī bin ʻAbd al-Raḥīm begins this story, ʻJudge Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Wāṣil, the proprietor of this history, said…'[554] Another instance of ʻAlī's own words is, ʻGod curse him', in reference to the French king. Ibn Wāṣil had never used this phrase about the Crusaders before.

At the end of this Crusade campaign, the Muslims managed to retake Damietta in 648/1250.[555] Ibn Wāṣil continues his narration to report this. When the news came he was with the King of Hama, al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II, as he states:

> The good news was presented to Sultan al-Manṣūr, God sanctify his soul. I was serving him when I saw the message that came to him, but I am not sure in which year this happened.[556]

As indicated before, several historians narrate that people became optimistic when the weak King al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh arrived in Egypt during the war with the Crusaders, whereas no one referred to a happy reaction when Shajar al-Durr became queen, even though she was able to deal excellently with the Muslims' situation during the conflict after the death of King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. They just reported the manifestations of joy and relief after the end of the Crusade campaign as a Muslim victory. Ibn Wāṣil says about this:

> This victory was greater than the first one. I meant the one that was in 618 during King al-Kāmil's days. This is because of the great number of people who were killed and arrested; the prisons in Cairo were full of Franks. The

[554] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 133.

[555] Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 307; Ṣaydam, '*Jihād al-sulṭān al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb*', p. 142.

[556] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 135.

> good news spread throughout all Muslim lands, and it was announced with joy and pleasure.[557]

The last point to be made regarding this issue is that some modern scholars, such as ʻĀshūr, ignore Shajar al-Durr's role and attribute the Muslim victory to al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, as mentioned before.[558] There are others who dispute this and call Shajar al-Durr a hero of this period, especially regarding her role in the jihad. This latter group is represented by Mernissi, who asserts that Shajar al-Durr was solely responsible for the success of Muslims in their jihad against the Crusaders.[559] Another is Aḥmad Salāma, who argues that she was the de facto leader of the Muslim military and the mastermind, even during the age of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. He claims that when the Crusaders came, the sultan felt disheartened, and 'She put him at ease and swore to him that she would defeat the invaders and stand up to them.'[560] Some modern scholars go too far by inventing stories that are not in the contemporary sources of that period. For example, Ḥanafī al-Muḥallāwī states: 'She was born in Egypt, from a poor family. Her mother died when she was eighteen, and her father suffered from depression. As a result, she offered herself for sale and was bought by one of the sultan's men. She was chosen by the nation and removed by the Mamluks.'[561]

When the above statement is compared with those of other chroniclers, mistakes in al-Muḥallāwī's account can be identified: Shajar al-Durr cannot be said to be 'Egyptian' since there is no information about her family, nor is there any record of how she reached al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's court or came to be chosen by Mamluks. Moreover,

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[557] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 134.

[558] See this chapter, 'Shajar al-Durr and jihad according to Ibn Wāṣil'.

[559] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt*, p. 138.

[560] Aḥmad Salāma, *al-Khālidāt 100: awwalāhunna al-sayyida Maryam* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2010), p. 220.

[561] Ḥanafī al-Muḥallāwī, *al-Nisā' wa lu'bat al-siyāsa* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrī al-Lubnānī,1988), p. 63.

she was not nominated by the public. This 'new information' in the works of these writers could be a result of the lack of information in the early Islamic sources about this woman and others, which leads some feminists to fall into the trap of guessing. Sometimes, in their fervour to correct the marginalization of women's contributions in making history, they go beyond the truth.

To sum up, Ibn Wāṣil's assessment was that Shajar al-Durr expended great efforts to preserve the future of Egypt for all Muslims. In his view, she was used by the Mamluks to control turbulent situations at that time; he and other historians believe that she was forced by circumstances to assume power. Moreover, it can be accepted that Shajar al-Durr's role on the battlefield was limited to offering suggestions, military plans, and moral support. Therefore, it is understandable that earlier historians do not mention her role in this matter precisely because a Muslim woman cannot be a military commander.

Shajar al-Durr in Power, Based on Ibn Wāṣil's Evaluation

Appointing Shajar al-Durr as a queen according to *Mufarrij*

This part investigates the text of *Mufarrij* in terms of the historian's ability to make his own assessment about the political role of Shajar al-Durr. This section involves two main parts: to show Ibn Wāṣil's account of her effort to reach power, and the implications of this bold move for the Islamic society.

After the death of al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, the most crucial step was appointing Shajar al-Durr as queen. Ibn Wāṣil emphasizes that this was not her desire, and she did nothing to bring it about. The plan was made by the Mamluk princes:

> When King al-Muʿaẓẓam was killed as was mentioned, the princes and the Bahrī in the royal deputation spoke about who would be capable to become atabeg of the military. They agreed that Shajar al-Durr, mother of [*wālidat*] Khalīl, son of King al-Ṣāliḥ, would be in charge of the monarchy, and all the royalty's stamps should be done under her name with her signature. They

> offered the atabeg position to Prince Ḥusām al-Dīn, telling him that the [late] sultan had depended on him and he therefore deserved the position. He refused and suggested that al-Ṭawashī Shihāb al-Dīn (Rashīd) al-Kabīr take his place, so they offered him the position, but he also rejected it. They offered it to Prince Khas Turk al-Kabīr, one of the greatest Ṣāliḥī princes, but he also did not want it. They agreed to give the atabeg position to ʻIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turkumānī al-Sālihī, and they begged Shajar al-Durr to be the sultana and ʻIzz al-Dīn to be atabeg and in charge of the military. Prince ʻIzz al-Dīn al-Rūmī al-Ṣāliḥī came to Cairo and ascended to the castle. Queen Umm Khalīl was informed, all matters were under her control, and all signatures were signed by her. She became Sultana of Cairo, Egypt, and other Egyptian territory.[562]

The majority of early historians, including al-Maqrīzī, agreed with Ibn Wāṣil that Shajar al-Durr did not do anything to encourage the Mamluks to choose her as the Muslims' queen, as she was not with them when they decided to appoint her.[563] Ibn Taghrībirdī clearly confirms this: 'Shajar al-Durr Umm Khalīl became sultana, and the decision was made by the princes and her followers, the Ṣāliḥī Mamluks.'[564]

Shajar al-Durr's reaction to this selection is not recorded, but it is hard to believe that this woman, who had played a significant political role in earlier days, could not have used her feminine wiles to attain her goal of being queen. During the reign of al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, she might have felt that she was going to lose her power through him. At the same time, surely, she needed somebody to support her claim—such as the Mamluks. This is not the place to discuss what the Mamluks thought about this decision, but it is obvious that their previous experience with al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh led them to fear that the dynasty would inevitably be lost. They also understood that their position as Mamluks (i.e., slaves) meant that the Muslim society would find it difficult to accept their access to power. For slaves, reaching the throne immediately after al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān

[562] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol, 6, pp. 132-133.

[563] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 459.

[564] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 331.

Shāh's death was not easy.[565] Moreover, freedom was a fundamental prerequisite of the position of ruler in Islam.[566] Ibn Taghrībirdī explicitly refers to this in his statement about al-Muʿizz Aybak (684-655/1250-1257), who became the second husband of Shajar al-Durr:

> He was a brave, generous, rational, and seasoned politician king. He donated a great deal of [his] wealth. Throughout his reign he gave away money and horses in countless numbers, until people became happy. This may be because the sultan was touched by slavery. [But] the people of Egypt did not like him until he died. They would make him hear what he hated to hear, even in front of him. When he rode in the streets, they said they just did not want any sultan or head of state unless he was born free.[567]

Certainly, this decision by the Mamluks matched Shajar al-Durr's aims. This dangerous decision, a precedent in the history of Islam, could not have been taken without dedicated support, especially from men. Therefore, all the steps that were taken for her to attain the throne were under men's supervision. The only historian who sheds light on Shajar al-Durr's feeling about this decision is al-Maqrīzī, who states, 'They told her what they had agreed, and she liked it.'[568] Even though Ibn Wāṣil kept silent on this point, it might be that he expected that she was definitely happy about the Mamluks' reaction, for it matched her own desire. In any case, she accepted the position and found the best defenders and supporters.

It is surprising that earlier historians such as Ibn Taghrībirdī do not criticize the Mamluks' support of Shajar al-Durr, even though they do not try to identify the

[565] This attitude from some *'ulamā'* toward the slaves is because they were owned by others and thus would not have full executive authority. Other *'ulamā'* disagreed, and based their view on the Prophet Muḥammad's statement, 'Listen and obey, even if you are ruled by a black slave, his head like a raisin.' al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniya* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīh, n.d.), p. 20; 'Abd al-Razzāq Aḥmad Sanhūrī, *Fiqh al-khilāfa wa-taṭawwuruhā li-tuṣbiḥ 'uṣbat umam sharqīya*, eds. Tawfīq Shāwī and Nadiya 'Abd al-Razzaq Sanhūrī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risala, n.d.), p. 109.

[566] al-Ṣāwī Muhammad al-Ṣāwī, *Nisā' al-khulafā* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nāfidha, n.d.), p. 60.

[567] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 7, p. 12.

[568] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk,* vol. 1, p. 459.

Mamluks' motivation for installing her as queen. Ibn Wāṣil, like other historians, does not comment on the Mamluks' attitude. Perhaps they did not find this to be a serious goal in comparison with the role the Mamluks played in service to the Muslims against the threat of the Crusaders and Mongols, or maybe Ibn Wāṣil and others who wrote their histories during the reign of the Mamluks would not openly criticize their Mamluk rulers. The only clear statement in this regard is by Ibn Taghrībirdī: 'They agreed that she became their queen because of her good reputation, her prolific mind, and the quality of her management.'[569] Yet it is obvious that the Mamluks took this decision to realize a deeper political goal: that of bringing the throne under their control.

Shajar al-Durr and legitimacy in Ibn Wāṣil's text

Ibn Wāṣil keeps silent about Shajar al-Durr's ways that she followed to gain legitimacy as queen. It has been mentioned earlier that the new ruler must seek the caliph's approval. [570] Thus, it was crucial for Shajar al-Durr to obtain the caliph's acknowledgement; at the same time, if she were to become sultana, any new Ayyubid kings would have to obtain her acknowledgement as the Sultana of Egypt. What is reported about her method to legitimize her position can be found in al-Maqrīzī's statements. He reports that on the new currency this was written: 'al-Musta'simīyya al-Ṣāliḥīyya, Queen of Muslims, Mother of King al-Manṣūr Khalīl, Prince of the Faithful'.[571] Al-Maqrīzī also reported what the imams said in every Friday prayer:

> 'God save the predominant, al-Ṣāliḥīyya, the Queen of Muslims, the infallibility of religion and the world, the mother of Khalīl, al-Musta'simīyya, and the partner of King al-Ṣāliḥ'. Another said, 'God keep the High Sultan

[569] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 332.

[570] See Chapter Two, 'Ayyubid titles and honorifics'.

[571] al-Maqrīzī. *al-Sulūk,* vol. 1, p. 459.

protected, the Impregnable Veil, the Queen of Muslims, and the Mother of King Khalīl'.[572]

It was the tradition for each new Ayyubid ruler to choose symbols and honorifics to be inscribed on his (or her) currency.[573] These titles and honorifics indicate that Shajar al-Durr made an effort to legitimize herself by attributing herself to her husband (al-Ṣāliḥ), her son (Khalīl) who had died at the age of three months, and the Abbasid caliph (al-Musta'sim), but this did not help.[574] As indicated earlier, when a *jāriya* had children, she would be able to play a decisive role in the distribution of the father's inheritance, thus had Shajar al-Durr's son survived, she would have shared in her son's right to rule.[575] Nevertheless, she sought to hold onto any form of legitimacy, but this was categorically rebuffed, as will be shown later. Regarding this failed attempt by Shajar al-Durr, Ibn Wāṣil avoids any mention or indication of it. It is clear that he intentionally ignores it. Indeed, if he were to have mentioned it, he would have been seen as taking a position either as disapproving of his master the sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, or as disapproving of the Ayyubid family. He is careful in how he reports this part of Shajar al-Durr's history, so as to report the story in a way that cannot affect this family's reputation in history. The evidence of this is that Ibn Wāṣil tends to use the passive voice when he comments on any action taken by Shajar al-Durr as the actual ruler. 'The sermons were offered for her as sultana in Cairo and other Egyptian territories.'[576] Regarding her giving *khil'a* to

[572] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 459.

[573] The coinage and the Friday sermon are used as a caliph's symbols. Minting currency had been practised since the early Islamic era to indicate the sovereignty of the Islamic state, with names, titles, or any Islamic honorifics of the ruler. In the Friday sermons imams and their congregations would pray for the caliph. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm 'Uways, *al-Ḥaḍāra al-islāmīya: ibdā' al-māḍī wa āfāq al-mustaqbal* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣaḥwa lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2010), p. 66; al-Amīn Muḥammad 'Awaḍallāh, *Aswāq al-qāhira munḏu al-ʿaṣr al-Fāṭimī ḥattā nihāyat ʿaṣr al-Mamālīk* (Cairo: al-Hai'a al-Miṣrīya al-ʿAmma lil-Kitāb, 2014), pp. 62-63.

[574] al-Ṣāwī, *Nisā' al-khulafā*, p. 72; Jackson, *The Seventh Crusade*, p. 135.

[575] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 201.

[576] Ibid, vol. 6, p. 133.

the princes in Egypt as a male sultan would have done, he writes, 'On Monday, the thirteenth of Safar, the princes of Cairo were given *khula'*.'[577] This gives the impression that he confirms that Shajar al-Durr was used by the Mamluks, and that power was actually in their hands, not in hers. In contrast, al-Maqrīzī refers to her clearly, saying, 'On Monday the thirteenth, Shajar al-Durr gave *khula'* to the princes and elites, and she spent money on them and all the military.'[578]

Nor was it easy to appoint a female ruler. It caused much opposing reaction from the caliph, the Muslim kings, and the Muslim society at large, although a variety of measures were taken to legitimize her position.[579] The Mamluks and Shajar al-Durr, who had anticipated the Muslim reaction, created a way to circumvent the customary selection of the sultan, consistent with the teachings of Islam, in order to facilitate the transfer of power into the hands of the Mamluks.[580] After three months, she decided to choose one of the Mamluks to be her husband, so she married al-Mu'izz Aybak in order to retain her political power.[581] Since the new sultan was from the slave class, she would continue to act as queen.[582] However, this was very constraining for her new husband, and it caused him to seek to get rid of her, as will be explained later.

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[577] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 136.

[578] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 462.

[579] This point is discussed in depth later in this chapter.

[580] Islamic law's attitude toward the political women authority is discussed in depth in this chapter later.

[581] al-'Aynī: *'Iqd al-jumān*, vol. 1, p. 29; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 6, p. 374.

[582] The Mamluk (*mamlūk*) system was a tradition that was common in Muslim states at that time. There were conflicts between the Ayyūbīds themselves, and between them and the other Muslim dynasties such as the remaining princes of the Zangid dynasty. Each of these rulers bought a number of Mamluks to be his personal bodyguards. Although those Mamluks had been removed from their parents and sold when they were very young, and they grew up and were educated as Muslims, it is sure that their environments of origin had a lasting effect on them, and on their thoughts and attitudes about women in general. They came from different places in Europe; they were Turks, Mongols, Circassians, Germans, Spaniards, and others. Booming trade contributed at that time by the European commercial cities to ease their transfer and sale to Muslim monarchs. Each team of Mamluks were loyal to king who had bought them and committed to bringing them up. This explains why they had group names indicating their owners, such as al-Kāmiliyya, al-Ṣāliḥiyya, al-Ashrafiyya, and others. See, 'Āshūr, *Miṣr wa-al-Shām,* p. 125; Levanoni, 'The Mamluks', 124-125; Khālid Ṣāyigh, *al-Nuqūd al-islāmīya* (Abu Dhabi: al-Majma' al-Thaqāfī, 2005), p. 73.

An unusual event provoked the historians to report some strange details, maybe because they were surprised. Ibn Taghrībirdī elucidated the protocols to be followed in elevating a woman to the throne. 'But she did not wear the caliph's *khil'a* as usual, but they gave her an oath of allegiance in the sultanate over [several] days, group by group.'[583] In general, and according to the Islamic tradition in appointing the new sultan, there is a precise ceremony regarding this. Shajar al-Durr's ceremony and the protocols were different from those for men, perhaps due to the Mamluks' wish to avoid upsetting the Muslim society.

Having a Muslim queen was not a normal event; therefore, Shajar al-Durr's story has been mentioned widely in Islamic sources, and historians have displayed various attitudes towards her. Some, such as Ibn Taghrībirdī, show a high respect for her.[584] Others, such as the contemporary Egyptian historian Ibn al-'Amīd (d.671/1273) depict her as cunning and artful.[585] The historical accounts of Ibn al-Dawādārī and Ibn al-Jawzī tend to be brief, but their attitude toward Shajar al-Durr's rule is clear, as in their accounts her career is marginalized. It seems that their extreme distaste for a woman ruler meant that they made no reference to her role during her husband's death; instead, they attribute everything to the prince Fakhr al-Dīn bin Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.[586] Ibn al-Dawādārī confirms elsewhere in his text that the primary role in governance was carried out by al-Mu'izz Aybak, not by Shajar al-Durr. Documents are issued and marked with Shajar al-Durr's signature, but the actual management was by Prince al-Mu'izz Aybak who was the atabeg of the young King al-Ashraf, son of King al-Mas'ūd, son of King al-Kāmil, the

[583] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 332.

[584] Ibid, p. 373.

[585] al-Makīn Jirjis Ibn al-'Amīd, *Akhbār al-Ayyūbīyīn* (Port Said: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīnīya, n.d.), p. 43.

[586] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 7, p. 373; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 409.

last member of the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt.[587] Ibn Wāṣil expresses his opinion clearly: 'This event had not happened in Islam before. The judgment and disposition had happened before, like Ḍayfa Khātūn, daughter of King al-'Ādil, who was a regent in Aleppo and its territories. This was after the death of her son al-'Azīz, until she died. The sermon for the sultan was offered for her grandson, God have mercy on him.'[588]

Ibn Wāṣil repeats his wondering about this event in various places in his text, which indicates that he was very surprised by this decision. But in fact, historical documents report another queen in Islam ten years prior to this: Raḍīya, the daughter of Iltutmush, in Delhi in 655/1257.[589] It is not known whether or not Ibn Wāṣil knew about Queen Raḍīya. It seems that there is a gap in his knowledge about her. It might be that this was due to the difference in language and geographical factors. In regard to Ibn Wāṣil's comment, it is obvious that he expresses his surprise about this event. It might be that the only rulership position acceptable for women, in his view and in that of other contemporary Muslim historians, is that of regency. They do not deny that women can intervene in politics, but they strongly reject the concept of a ruling queen.

Shajar al-Durr might have wanted to destroy these restrictions, so she started to act as a real ruler by stamping her own currency and asking the imams to pray for her from their pulpits during Friday prayers, as indicated formerly. It is not known to what extent Ḍayfa Khātūn had influenced Shajar al-Durr, but it could be said that the role of Ḍayfa Khātūn as a de facto ruler in Aleppo, even as regent, encouraged Shajar al-Durr to take this course of action.[590] In fact, it seems that even though Ibn Wāṣil does not like the office of 'queenship', he appreciates Shajar al-Durr: perhaps because of her significant

[587] Ibn al-Dawadārī, *Kanz al-durar,* vol. 7, p. 384; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij,* vol. 6, p. 141.

[588] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 133.

[589] Levanoni, 'Šağar ad-Durr', p. 209.

[590] Ḍayfa Khātūn's political role and Ibn Wāṣil's assessment are presented in the next chapter.

role during her husband's death. This could explain why he tries to give the impression that at least her power was under the Mamluks' supervision. This means that although he did not accept the presence of a woman in power as a queen, he would not harm or criticize her because she was a better option for the state than King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh.

Modern scholars are divided into two groups regarding to Shajar al-Durr's story: supporters and opponents. Both sides have ignored the historical truth mentioned by Muslim historians who were contemporaries or near contemporaries. Each side tackles the subject according to its agenda, and to some extent at the expense of historical fact. This confirms that early Muslim historians reported on women's political participation more reliably than do modern scholars.[591] Early Muslim historians have been more accurate and credible in reporting historical events than have modern scholars, even though the latter give women more attention. The story of Shajar al-Durr is a prime example of this phenomenon.

Ramifications of Shajar al-Durr's accession, from Ibn Wāṣil's viewpoint

It is obvious that early scholars did not agree that a woman could be queen. Installing a woman as queen was not easily accepted by many Muslims in the society. The best source about this point is Ibn Wāṣil, who explains in detail how this decision had an elevated level of opposition from Muslims. According to the protocols of the Ayyubid administration, as explained before, the next step for the Mamluks was to gain the approval and loyalty of other Ayyubid kings in Syria. In Damascus there was a group of Mamluks loyal to Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. They later played a significant role in improving the situation. Ibn Wāṣil's description about their reaction is as follows:

[591] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt,* p. 74.

> The preacher Aṣīl al-Dīn al-Isʻardī, who was one of the imams of King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, God have mercy on him, went as messenger to Damascus, to the deputy of the royalty in Damascus, Prince Jamāl al-Dīn bin Yaghmūr, and to the other princes… When Aṣīl al-Dīn arrived in Damascus, he asked for [their pledges of] loyalty to Shajar al-Durr and to ʻIzz al-Dīn al-Turkmānī as atabeg and the head of the military. And he asked them to offer their sermons for Shajar al-Durr. Jamāl al-Dīn disagreed with Aṣīl al-Dīn and did not respond to him.[592]

Another aspect of this rejection, according to Ibn Wāṣil, was that a group of Mamluks called al-Qaymariyya, in Damascus, also refused to accept this appointment, and directly avoided supporting Shajar al-Durr. Instead, they preferred to give their loyalty to the Ayyūbīds. ʻAl-Qaymariyya sent a letter to the Sultan, King al-Nāṣir of Aleppo, asking him to come to them [so they would] give him Damascus.ʼ[593]

The problems in Syria increased. This reaction by the Ayyūbīds is predictable as this was an unusual event. They also rejected the Mamluks' movement, since the Mamluks had dared to hope to rule Egypt.[594] Therefore, King al-Saʻīd bin al-ʻAzīz took al-Ṣubaybaḥ in Syria, King al-Mughīth bin al-ʻĀdil bin al-Kāmil controlled Kerak and Shobak in Jordan, and Sultan al-Nāṣir bin Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn bin al-ʻAzīz took Damascus.[595] Ibn Wāṣil describes the conflict in detail: ʻKing al-Nāṣir and his friends entered Damascus. He took it peacefully without abstention or a fight. He gave gifts to Prince Jamāl al-Dīn bin Yaghmūr and to al-Qaymariyya, and he treated them nicely. He arrested a group of Egyptian princes – the Mamluks of King al-Ṣāliḥ. His regime in Damascus was stable.ʼ[596]

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[592] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 136-137.

[593] Ibid, vol. 6, p. 136.

[594] Ṭaqqūsh, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, pp. 393-394.

[595] ʻĀshūr*, Miṣr wa-al-Shām*, p. 125; Ṭaqqūsh, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 395.

[596] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 137.

Prince Jamāl al-Dīn bin Yaghmūr had a measured reaction toward the Mamluk movement in Egypt.[597] It was important for the Ayyūbīds to capture the city, and it was easily taken from the Mamluks by King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf. Naturally, the news of al-Nāṣir Yūsuf's move to Damascus reached Egypt. According to Ibn Wāṣil, the strategic and symbolic importance of Cairo made the Mamluks take steps to be ready to face the king and prevent him from taking the city: 'The princes and soldiers gathered in the mountain castle. They renewed their loyalty to Khalīl's mother and Prince al-Turkmānī [al-Muʻizz Aybak].'[598] The Baḥrī and Ṣāliḥī Mamluks in Cairo expected that when King al-Nāṣir arrived and took it, they might be arrested by him; therefore, they arrested some leaders and princes of al-Qaymariyya who lived in Cairo.[599] This action is reported in *Mufarrij* under the heading 'Disturbance occurred in Cairo'.[600] This sentence, although short, is also indicative of Ibn Wāṣil's view, since he may want to imply that choosing a woman to be head of state had been a huge mistake and it would cause division among Muslims at a time when they needed to unite to face threats in the Muslim world.

Disapproval and rejection of the role of queen came not only from the Muslim elites, but also from the Abbasid caliph al-Muṣtaʻṣim. Al-Maqrīzī is the only historian who refers to the caliph's attitude. The caliph sent a sarcastic message from Baghdad to the Mamluks in Egypt; it said, 'If you do not have men there, tell us, so we can send you men.'[601] Al-Maqrīzī may have highlighted this because, as mentioned before, he believes that Shajar al-Durr had worked in a subtle way to achieve this event. None of the contemporary historians, not even Ibn al-Jawzī or Ibn Wāṣil, mention the relationship

[597] Ṭaqqūsh, *Tā'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 395.

[598] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij,* vol. 6, p. 138.

[599] al-Qaymariyya took their name from Qaymar castle located near Mosul. The Ṣāliḥī were Sultan al- Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's Mamluks (Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 395- 394).

[600] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 138.

[601] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk,* vol. 1, p. 464.

between Shajar al-Durr and the caliph. Regarding Ibn al-Jawzī, he mentions Shajar al-Durr's story in brief. This is in contrast of Ibn Wāṣil, who highlights this event. Although Ibn Wāṣil might not share the caliph's attitude, he cannot criticize the caliph openly. Mernissi tries to interpret the attitude toward women in positions of authority. She claims that in history women's authority was not recognized because it harmed the men who enjoyed the caliph's blessing and held honourable titles. Many of these titles were given to kings who sometimes had little political wisdom. Mernissi argues that the caliph's attitude stemmed from his belief that women were incapable of practising politics.[602] In her assessment, Shajar al-Durr's political skills were superior to those of the caliph.[603] It seems that this perception by the caliphs of the inherent inferiority of women was passed down through generations since the era of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr, when he advised his son to be careful of the influence of women on his own political decisions.[604]

Indeed, the caliph's objection was a serious blow to Shajar al-Durr, and it contributed to the preponderance of the opposition. This was contempt and underestimation of Shajar al-Durr; and if this letter indicates anything, it is the short-sightedness of the caliph, who did not appreciate the role she had played in saving the Muslims from a precarious situation after her husband's death. He did not even make this comment politely, because she was a woman, regardless of her skills. A conscientious man such as Ibn Wāṣil found Shajar al-Durr to be the right person who had come at the right time. It is probable that, in his assessment, if the caliph had been in Shajar al-Durr's place, he certainly would not have anything to offer to the Muslims, due to his well-known weakness as a politician.[605] Ibn Wāṣil's silence on this point is therefore a

[602] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt,* pp. 37-38.

[603] Ibid, p. 43.

[604] Abbott, *al-Mar'a wa-al-siyāsa fī al-Islām,* p. 29.

[605] Ḥasan, *al-Ta'rīkh al-islami al-'amm***,** p. 465.

rejection of the caliph's stand. To prove this, it is noticeable that Caliph al-Muṣta'ṣim's biography is not mentioned in *Mufarrij*, while other caliphs' biographies are.[606] In his text, Ibn Wāṣil, like other Muslim historians during the Abbasid period, usually gives special respect to caliphs as Prophet Muḥammad's nominal vicegerents. In contrast with the absence of this particular caliph's biography, he gives at least a short biographical account of Shajar al-Durr's career.

It is worth mentioning that the rejection of Shajar al-Durr's accession was also seen at the public level, and there were numerous demonstrations in Cairo. Thus, the government was forced to shut the gates of the city to prevent the opposition movement from spreading to the rest of the provinces.[607] The public reaction was not mentioned by most Muslim chroniclers, perhaps because they limited their record to the history of the elites and tended not to care about describing the citizens' reactions to political affairs.[608] Even the *'ulamā'* had a role, such as al-'Izz bin 'Abd al-Salām, who compiled a book about how Muslims would be affected badly if a woman controlled them.[609] This book was based on a hadith of Prophet Muḥammad in which he said, 'A nation whose affairs are managed by a woman will not prosper.'[610] Ibn Wāṣil is one of the *'ulamā'* of that period; he expresses his rejection by his method in reporting and highlights the consequence of this step taken by Shajar al-Durr and the Mamluks.

The above-mentioned Muslim chroniclers' reactions and comments differ from each other, but they all agreed that women must not be rulers and that the Mamluks were correct when they changed their decision and chose a man instead of Shajar al-Durr. Each

[606] See Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 212.
[607] al-Ṣāwī, *Nisā' al-khulafā*, p. 73.
[608] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 125.
[609] 'Alī al-Ṣallābī, *al-Ayyūbīīn ba'd Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 449.
[610] This hadith is studied in depth later in this chapter.

one of them expresses his own view through his way of telling the story. Ibn Wāṣil writes, 'The state cannot be saved if the ruler is a woman. There must be a man, and everyone must agree on the choice.'[611] Ibn al-Dawādārī mentions: 'The Bahrī and Turks met, deliberated among themselves, and said, "The state cannot be saved if the ruler is a woman." As stated in Prophet Muḥammad's words, "How do people succeed if they are controlled by a woman?"[612]

Ibn Taghrībirdī does not accept Shajar al-Durr as a real ruler, although he respects her highly; he comments, 'Egyptian lands remained without a sultan for a period, and many of the princes dared to place their hopes in the sultana.'[613] Ibn al-'Amīd has a different opinion; he believes that Shajar al-Durr herself made 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak a king: 'In this year, Prince 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turkmānī married the queen, Shajar al-Durr, the mistress of his master, King al-Ṣāliḥ. She removed a position of royalty from herself and gave it to him. This lasted for three months.'[614] Al-Maqrīzī agrees that Shajar al-Durr gave 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak the chance to become a king.[615]

To sum up, in Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation as to whether this was Shajar al-Durr's or the Mamluks' wish, his main conclusion is that the concept of a Muslim queen was a failure. The early historians mentioned in this chapter all agree that women should have no role in the political scene, but that if this happened, it must be behind a man, even if this man is not capable. It might be that those concerned in commenting about women ruling wanted to show the next generations what could happen if any other woman were to become head of state.

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[611] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij,* vol. 6, p. 140.

[612] Ibn al-Dawadārī, *Kanz al-durar,* vol. 1, p. 39.

[613] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm,* vol. 7, p. 4.

[614] Ibn al-'Amīd, *Akhbār al-Ayyūbīyīn,*, vol. 4, p. 39.

[615] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk,* vol. 1, p. 464.

Shajar al-Durr's Death According to Mufarrij

When Shajar al-Durr married al-Mu'izz Aybak, the chroniclers stop referring to her in the political arena, though she was certainly a partner in power. It seems that this framework was acceptable in Muslims' minds. This way of thinking was not limited to the Muslim world: even in Christian regions during the Middle Ages, most medieval queens shared authority with their partners; as such, they were consorts rather than official rulers.[616] An exception was Navarre, where the largest number of women had held political authority via a direct and overt role.[617] In contrast, the Crown of Aragon had no female succession; women could not inherit the throne, although they did serve as lieutenants.[618] In the role of a consort, the woman was expected to be humble, docile, sober, chaste, modest, silent, and subject to her husband. She should also have any other qualities that would benefit the king and ensure good offspring to continue the royal line.[619] This common attitude about the role of females in the political sphere is not linked with a specific religion or society; rather it stems from a broader patriarchal stereotype about the limited abilities of women compared to men, and this affects male confidence in female political. As with stereotypes in general, this notion is not correct, and the political life of Shajar al-Durr provides strong evidence that ought to change the male tendency to cling to their beliefs about the inefficacy of females.

Historians have written about the relationship between Shajar al-Durr and her second husband, al-Mu'izz Aybak. She may have had a strong influence in the court, but it seems that the divergence of their interests was greater than what was mutually

[616] Nuria Silleras-Fernandez, *Power, Piety and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship: Maria de Luna* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 2.

[617] Elena Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre: Succession, Politics, and Partnership, 1274-1512* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 5-6.

[618] Fernandez, *Power, Piety and Patronage*, p. 6.

[619] Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre*, p. 16.

beneficial, so that each soon began to wish to be rid of the other. With two such ambitious personalities, it is not surprising that trouble could arise if these partners could not find a balance of power that they were both happy with.[620] Their marriage ended fatally for both when Shajar al-Durr arranged to kill her husband in 655/1257, as a result of which, she was assassinated by al-Mu'izz Aybak's supporters in the same year.[621]

Muslim historians, including Ibn Taghrībirdī, al-Maqrīzī, and others, list various reasons for Shajar al-Durr's plot to murder her husband, but they all agree that the main reason was jealousy. However, Ibn Wāṣil makes an excuse:

> It was known this year that King al-Mu'izz wanted to marry the daughter of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', the Governor of Mosul. Letters were exchanged between them, and news of this reached his wife, Shajar al-Durr. She became jealous, and this grew hard on her. She was Turkish and had a strong personality; therefore, she intended to kill him and make someone else king.[622]

Ibn Wāṣil's excuse for her aggressive reaction was that she was Turkish. It seems that in his mind there is a link between her ethnicity and her deed. According to his statement it can be concluded that Turks have a strong personality and they do not accept defeat. Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229), in his book *Mu'jam al-Buldān,* describes the Turks by asserting, 'They have great self-esteem, and a strong grudge of animosity toward their enemies.'[623] Based on al-Ḥamawī's depiction of the Turks, and Ibn Wāṣil's comment about Shajar al-Durr in this deed, it can be said that Ibn Wāṣil found her reaction predictable due to her ethnicity, not because she was female. Either way, it is clear that his message was to justify her deed. This interpretation from Ibn Wāṣil could refer to his scientific thought in dealing with the historical facts. He agrees with Ibn

[620] Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre*, p. 10.

[621] al-Ṣāwī, *Nisā' al-khulafā*, p. 83.

[622] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 194.

[623] Yāqūt ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1986), vol. 2, p. 24.

Khaldūn that ethnicity and environment had a huge impact on people's manner.[624] Jealousy is a normal feeling for any woman in Shajar al-Durr's position, but not all women could or would kill their husbands. In this account Ibn Wāṣil gives solid evidence that he does not make his judgment according to what he heard or read; in any case, he made his investigation and then his assessment following what, to him, was a reasonable and logical argument, just as he does throughout his *Mufarrij*, treating women with the same level of respect and criticism as he treated men. In support of this one can point to the fact that of all the historians whose work is discussed in this study, Ibn Wāṣil is the only historian who answers the question of why she killed her husband.

Some historians suggest other reasons. Ibn al-'Amīd posits that al-Mu'izz hated her because she reminded him that she had facilitated his becoming King of Egypt and she had given him the money to do so. The situation escalated between them, and they were angry with each other.[625] Ibn Taghrībirdī surmises, 'She imagined that he might intend to exile her or to kill her because he was tired of her authority and control.'[626]

Another point to be addressed is that Ibn Wāṣil avoids stating what she had done with King al-Mu'izz Aybak's first wife, Umm 'Alī; al-Maqrīzī, on the other hand, describes their relationship: 'Shajar al-Durr was overwhelmed by matters in the kingdom and she prevented him from meeting his son's mother and forced him to divorce her.'[627] While al-Maqrīzī keeps depicting Shajar al-Durr as a strong and cunning woman, Ibn Wāṣil shows her as clever and wise, but he probably avoids mentioning this incident with Umm 'Alī so as not to make Shajar al-Durr's reputation appear worse. Her conduct with the first wife may have caused the chronicler to think that the reason for killing al-Mu'izz

[624] Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rīkh Ibn Khaldūn,* p. 48.

[625] Ibn al-'Amīd, *Akhbār al-Ayyūbīyīn*, p. 43.

[626] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 6, p. 334.

[627] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 493.

was that she had lost control of her emotions, which had an impact on her behaviour and prevented her from correctly assessing the situation, and this in turn led her to not think as logically as she had during her first husband's death. In Ibn Wāṣil's opinion, if she had been able to think wisely when she heard about al-Muʿizz's engagement, she would not have done what she did. What is more, he gives evidence for her jealousy by stating:

> When she decided to do this, she sent a message to Ṣafī al-Dīn bin Marzūq, who was in a high position under King al-Ashraf Mūsā bin al-ʿĀdil. She consulted him about killing al-Muʿizz and she promised that she would appoint him to be the minister and the ruler of the state. His response to her was to reject this and to prevent her from doing what she wanted to do.[628]

It seems that Ibn Wāṣil's understanding was that she did not listen to any advice at all, and this led to many problems.[629]Although the Mamluks installed the new sultan, al-Muʿizz's son, soon after al-Muʿizz's death, they experienced numerous problems. For one, the Mamluks split into two groups. Those who sided with Shajar al-Durr against al-Muʿizz were called al-Ṣāliḥiyya, after their master al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, and they were loyal to him and his widow. They helped Shajar al-Durr because she was related to them and because they believed that she did many good things for them and for Egypt.[630] The second group, consisting of al-Muʿizz's followers, were called al-Muʿizzīyya. They believed that she had committed an awful crime which could not be forgiven. The two groups were in conflict as the latter group wanted to kill her, whereas the former tried to save her; in the end, al-Muʿizzīyya were the victors.[631]

All these events are mentioned in detail in *Mufarrij*. Ibn Wāṣil's comment is telling, 'Severe disruption occurred in the state, markets were closed, and there was a fear

[628] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 194.

[629] Ibid.

[630] al-Ṣāwī, *Nisā' al-khulafā*, p. 86.

[631] Ibid, p. 87.

of looting.'[632] This statement indicates that possibly his aim in reporting this story was to demonstrate that women should not be given independent authority, since the foregoing political events provided solid evidence that woman can engage in politics, but it is better if this is under a man's supervision.

Coming back to Ibn Wāṣil's silence on the role of Umm ʻAlī and her son in killing Shajar al-Durr: they played a crucial role in her murder. He also avoids mentioning the method used by al-Muʻizzīyya to assassinate her, and he never uses any language that can be seen as gloating. This can be understood by comparing his narration to those of other early historians such as al-Maqrīzī, who writes:

> …When al-Muʻizz's son became sultan on Friday the seventeenth, Shajar al-Durr was taken to his mother and beaten with wooden clogs until she died on Saturday, and then she was thrown from the castle wall into the moat, without her trousers and shirt. She stayed in the ditch for some days. The populace took her trousers. She was then buried a few days later; after her corpse was [already] stinking. She was transported in a woven basket [or a coracle] to her tomb near al-Shahd al-Nafīsī. Because of her strength when she knew that she was surrounded, she wasted a lot of jewels and pearls by breaking them in the mortar.[633]

Ibn Taghrībirdī confirms the role of al-Muʻizz's family, saying:

> She stayed in the red tower in the mountain castle. King al-Manṣūr ʻAlī bin al-Muʻizz and his mother provoked al-Muʻizzīyya to kill her and the Ṣāliḥī Mamluks prevented them due to the fact that she had been their master's *jāriyā*. They carried on until Saturday, the eleventh of the month of Rabīʻ al-Ākhar, when she was found outside the castle dead and [her clothes and jewellery] looted. She was transferred to the tomb that had been built by her.[634]

Ibn al-Dawādārī describes her death: 'When morning came, the news reached Nūr al-Dīn and Sayf al-Dīn Quṭuz, who was the greatest of his Mamluks. They attacked her

[632] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 199.

[633] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 494.

[634] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 7, pp. 336-337.

with a group of al-Mu‘izzīyya Mamluks. They strangled her and threw her naked body into the doorway of the tomb.’[635] Al-‘Aynī states, ‘They killed her and threw her in a ditch for three days.’[636] Ibn Wāṣil reports, ‘On Saturday, the eleventh of this month, Shajar al-Durr was found killed, outside the castle. She was taken to the tomb that had been built by her, and she was buried there.’[637]

Ibn Wāṣil usually gives his reports in detail, but for some reason, he narrates the news of Shajar al-Durr’s death only briefly. One reason for this is probably that his focus is on shedding light on the political causes and effects; Shajar al-Durr’s story with al-Mu‘izz’s wife and son is in the realm of the *harīm*, and it happened behind closed doors. Thus, perhaps Ibn Wāṣil believed that this kind of relationship is a private matter. Also, his high morals and religious personality are apparent, and they had an influence on his evaluation of this event, for Schadenfreude is not the attitude of a pious Muslim: On the contrary, Islamic teachings advise Muslims not to take pleasure in the misfortune of others.[638] Still, he does not forget to give advice to his Muslim readers, commenting, ‘This was the end of her life. Glory to God, whose sovereignty does not disappear.’[639] In other words, this is the end of the matter, although he was aware of the way Shajar al-Durr had treated al-Mu‘izz Aybak’s first wife and his son. He might also have been of the opinion that al-Mu‘izz himself remained isolated from his son and his first wife due to his desire for power. Ibn Wāṣil does not give any comment that tells the reader his assessment of al-Mu‘izz as a ruler; his attitude toward al-Mu‘izz remains a mystery.

[635] al-Dawadārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, p. 32.

[636] al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-jumān*, vol. 1, p. 165.

[637] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol., 6, p. 201.

[638] There are many verses in the Quran and in Prophet Muḥammad’s statements that advised Muslims not to gloat over others’ misfortunes. For instance, ‘If you have suffered a wound, they too have suffered a similar wound. We bring these days to people by turns, so that God may know those who believe, and choose witnesses from among you; and God does not love the unjust’ (Q. 3:140).

[639] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 201.

In general, it can be concluded that this is Ibn Wāṣil's view about this period, according to his statement about the years 647/1249 and 648/1250:

> In these two years—I meant 647 and 648—many oddities happened, which never had happened in any history. The Crusaders came with a huge number of soldiers and occupied Damietta in one day. The death of the sultan at that difficult time: no king can define the state; his death was kept a secret for three months and the sermons and mintage continued in his name during that period. The enemy attacked, and the Muslim camp was without any sultan, and then—the Muslim soldiers defeated the enemy directly. Another sultan came, and the people were joyful about this. They wore down the enemy and eradicated and killed them. Then the assassination of that king.[640] They appointed a woman in the court in his place, and the sermons were delivered in her name. All documents were released with her signature. This was never a happened in Islam. Remove her, then instal a new sultan.[641] This sultan was isolated; another sultan was designated after five days.[642] Then appoint an absent sultan, then abrogate this.[643] Holding a funeral for a sultan who died nearly one year ago: show grief, wear mourning.[644] These things never happened in any era before, not even anything similar to it.[645]

Regarding Ibn Wāṣil's comment above, he counts these two years as unusual years. He thinks that many things happened in a brief period, and all these were strange occurrences. It is clear that he wants to point out the instability that the Muslims experienced at that time. But it is not clear whether or not he believes that this is because of the interference of Shajar al-Durr in politics; there is no clear indication in his statements about this issue.

To conclude, Ibn Wāṣil's depiction of the death of Shajar al-Durr is unique compared to the aforementioned accounts by other early historians. He tries to deal with

[640] Ibn Wāṣil means King al-Muʿaẓẓam.

[641] That is, Sultan al-Muʿizz.

[642] That is, al-Ashraf bin al-Kāmil.

[643] That is, King al-Mughīth.

[644] That is, Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.

[645] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 144.

the issue in a scientific method by inferring the causes and problems; he tries to give proofs that can persuade the audience that the best political role for women is as a consort. His concern is to deal with the incidents from the political aspect; he avoids recording two kinds of reports, namely, rumours and facts not related to political issues.

Ibn Wāṣil's Attitude toward the Concept of a Female Monarch

Based on Ibn Wāṣil's depiction of Shajar al-Durr, compared to those of other early Muslim historians, and following Ibn Khaldūn's philosophy, it can be seen that Ibn Wāṣil had a strong belief that women, in their roles as *jawārī*, had a great presence in affecting historical events. He totally rejects the concept of queen as an autonomous ruler. However, this attitude is not limited to Muslims alone, for women in medieval times were generally neglected by the historians, with their power and influence rarely mentioned. Earenfight has an interesting interpretation of this phenomenon: 'Historians, both medieval and modern, who neglect queens, reflect anxieties that reveal the truth of the power of a queen.'[646] Despite the similarity between early historians in both east and west regarding the position of queen, perhaps for the reason asserted by Earenfight, it is important to note that for Muslim historians, there is another, stronger reason. Their attitude is based on Prophet Muḥammad's hadith, 'A nation whose affairs are managed by a woman will not prosper.' [647]

Jabr, in his book *al-Mar'a wa al-wilāyāt al-'āmma fī al-siyāsa al-shar'īya*, questions whether women are eligible to be in politics. He allocates substantial space in his book to discuss this particular hadith. In brief, the *'ulamā'* are in two camps regarding this statement by the Prophet. The first group think that it is a clear sign from the Prophet

[646] Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, pp. 3-4.

[647] Ruth Roded, *Women in Islam and the Middle East: a Reader* (London: Tauris, 1999), p. 3; Ruth Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: from Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who* (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p. 116.

that a woman is not allowed to be a politician. Their justification is that in order to hold a position such as queen, a woman would have to go out to perform all the duties of a Muslim leader, but these things are men's duties and do not match with women's nature as it is seen in Islam.[648] The second group believe that a woman is allowed to be in politics as a queen. They argue that this hadith referred to a specific people at a specific time, namely, the Persian nation when their throne was weak during the age of Pūrān, the daughter of Khusrau (Chosroes) II, during the Prophet's era.[649] They note that in modern days, there have been many women heads of state who have proved to be much more successful than men at governing.[650]

It is obvious that this debate happened among Muslim *'ulamā'* according to differences based on their various understanding of the Quran and the Hadith, which is usual and accepted in Islamic discourse.[651] Ibn Wāṣil must have known the differing opinions of the *'ulamā'* about this hadith; he is one of them, so he must have had his own interpretation regarding this hadith. In his presentation of Shajar al-Durr, he took the middle ground. He considers that the influence of women in making political decisions is unavoidable, but that a woman holding high political position should be a consort or regent, since this would help her in fulfilling some of the duties that (at least in his day and age) could not be done without men. It seems that his view was based on two points. First, he took into account the political roles of women in the early Islamic period, so he knew that in the Islamic framework women could engage in politics. Prophet Muḥammad's wives were a prime example: he consulted his wives on matters of state and

[648] Jabr, *al-Mar'a wa al-wilāyāt al-'āmma*, p. 68.

[649] Aḥmad bin Da'ūd Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, Mun'im 'Āmir and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (eds.) (Cairo: Wizārat al-Irshād al-Thaqāfa wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1960), p. 111.

[650] Jabr, *al-Mar'a wa al-wilāyāt al-'āmma*, p. 71.

[651] Roded, *Women in Islam*, p. 27.

took their advice seriously; his first wife, Khadīja, played a significant role in financing and supporting her husband in his work proselytizing and establishing Islam; and his wife ʻĀ'isha gave her support to the opponent of Caliph ʻAlī bin Abī Ṭālib, in the Battle of the Camel in 36/656.[652] In addition, women had vital roles in the battles during the Islamic conquest. For instance, during each battle, there was a group of women whose duty was to encourage the fighting men to defend both the civilian population and their God-given religion. Women also cared for the wounded soldiers during and after the battles, and some even fought and killed enemy soldiers.[653] What is more, Ibn Wāṣil knew that there are some cases in Islamic history when the Prophet and the Rightly-guided Caliphs paid attention to women's advice and recommendations in many important affairs of state.[654] There are many examples of the deep impact of women in politics, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The second point is Ibn Wāṣil's education in the field of philosophy. It might be that this training had an impact on his attitude regarding women's presence in politics. This can be extracted from what other Muslim philosophers have said about women and their role in society. The best example of this is the judge and philosopher Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), who lived in Spain in the sixth/twelfth century.[655] A Muslim scholar who was a strong supporter of the role of woman in the politics, he considered women to be equal to men in their nature, but different in some degrees. They are capable of doing what men

[652] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, pp. 301-309; Roded, *Women in Islam*, p. 33; Jane I. Smith, 'Women, Religion, and Social Change in Early Islam', in *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, ed. by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Ellison Banks Findly (New York: SUNY, 1985), p. 25.

[653] Nabia Abbott, 'Women and the State on the Eve of Islam', *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 58 (3: 1941), 263; Smith, 'Women, Religion, and Social Change in Early Islam', p. 25; A woman named Nusayba bint Kaʻb fended off attackers from Prophet Muhammad with her sword when he was wounded in the Battle of Uḥud in 3/625 (Roded, *Women in Islam*, p. 34).

[654] Muhammad Sharif Chaudhry, *An Introduction to Islamic State & Government* (Kuwait: Islamic Book Publishers, 1996), p. 243.

[655] Aḥmad ibn al-Qāsim Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʻa; *Min 'uyūn al-anbā' fī tabaqāt al-aṭibbā*', Nizār Riḍā (ed.), (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayā, n.d), p. 530. Liz Sonneborn, *Averroes (Ibn Rushd): Muslim Scholar, Philosopher, and Physician of the Twelfth Century* (New York: Rosen, 2006), p. 34.

do in war, philosophy, and other areas, and may sometimes become better than men in certain skills, such as music. Therefore, he asserts that nothing can prevent women from being rulers.[656] Ibn Wāṣil may have heard of or read Ibn Rushd's views on this topic, or he himself may have had similar thinking, and this may explain why he accepted the political role of woman. The difference between Ibn Wāṣil and Ibn Rushd on this subject is that the former thinks that a woman should have a man's support.

It is possible that Ibn Wāṣil rejected the idea of a role for women as head of state for a number of reasons. For one thing, none of the women in the early Islamic era nominated herself to be queen. Also, there is Prophet Muḥammad's aforementioned statement on this topic. Nonetheless, it is important to note that although Shajar al-Durr's career is narrated in the last part of *Mufarrij*, when his student ʻAlī bin ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Kātib added his contributions, Ibn Wāṣil's own view of Shajar al-Durr is clear. This can be concluded by comparison of his attitude toward the concept of a woman as queen with his attitude regarding a woman having a political role as a regent, as will be shown in the next chapter.

In examination of Ibn Wāṣil's performance as a historian based on Ibn Khaldūn's philosophy, it is expected that he was selective about what he heard and what he knew about the sultan's character. He tried to find the truth and avoided falling into counterfeiting or repeating unsubstantiated claims in his writing about Shajar al-Durr. This proves his skill as a historian who sought the truth in writing about women. What is more, he sometimes ignores certain political facts, while he highlights some events in detail. Definitely, this is because he has a specific message to the audience, and this message leads him to control his method in presenting this part of his history. His goal is

[656] Majdī Kāmil, *Ibn Rushd: ṭāqat nūr fī ʻālam muʻtim* (Cairo & Damascus: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʻArabī, 2013), p. 175.

to impart wisdom to subsequent generations about the negative impact of having a queen rule over any Muslim society.

The question that should be asked is: to what extent can Ibn Wāṣil's account about Shajar al-Durr be taken as more reliable than the accounts of other historians? This can be answered by examining his sources and his methodology in writing about Shajar al-Durr. Regarding his sources, as mentioned before they are as shown in Figure 1, below.

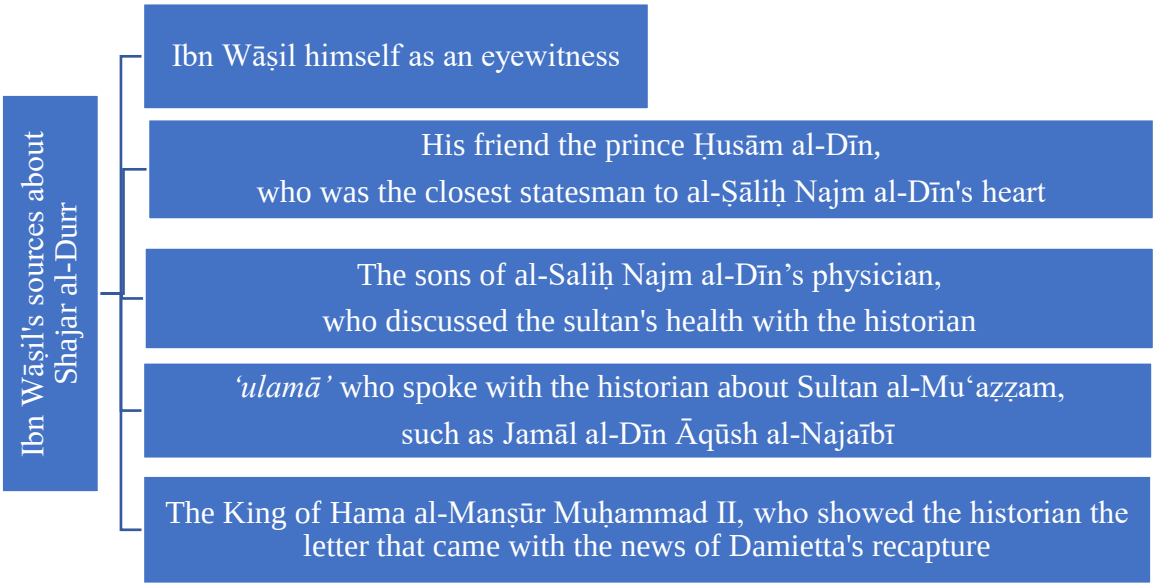

Figure 1. *Ibn Wāṣil's sources regarding Shajar al-Durr.*

According to the list above it can be seen that Ibn Wāṣil was very close to the locus of events. He had a variety of sources that allowed him to obtain a fuller picture of the personality of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, his wife, his son, and key people around them. Consequently, he can compare the news that he heard from several people, investigate it, and then match it with the elites based on what he knew about them. Definitely, he spent time in investigating and analysing what he heard, saw, and read. This mainly explains why he avoids mentioning certain details and focuses on others. Ibn Wāṣil can be counted

as one of the most reliable sources about this period, even if he may at times have been influenced by his emotions toward people around him, such as his friend Ḥusām al-Dīn.

Conclusion

This chapter is the second step in analyzing the historical text. In this chapter any and all mentions by Ibn Wāṣil of the *jawārī* in general, and of Shajar al-Durr in particular, were taken into account. Each historical fact regarding them studied individually. Therefore, this chapter has discussed many factors that contributed to the formation of Ibn Wāṣil's view of the *jawārī* and their role in politics. It has presented his religious understanding of their rights and the duties according to Islamic law. It also has explored what might have been in his thoughts and memory about their impact on the political scene. It was found that Ibn Wāṣil does think that the *jawārī* were part of the fabric of Islamic society: they were not merely a source of entertainment for the elites, but they also played a serious role in politics, culture, society, and art. Moreover, this chapter has explored the similarities and differences between *Mufarrij* and other early historians' accounts in order to extract Ibn Wāṣil's point of view about Shajar al-Durr and the queenship system. It can be said that he took an unbiased attitude as compared to other early historians, as demonstrated in his presentation of Shajar al-Durr. He tries to balance his judgment about her life and impact on Muslim history, considering his religious background and Islam's attitude toward the role of a queen in Islamic society. He avoids recording unverified accounts which he thinks are rumours. As a historian, he also tries as much as possible to set aside any emotions in order to interpret the facts rationally. He appreciates Shajar al-Durr's role in keeping the Islamic state safe during the Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's death, but he also criticizes her conduct in arranging her second husband's murder. This chapter has shown that the historian's sources regarding Shajar

al-Durr's career were crucial ones. This means that his report about Shajar al-Durr is reliable. Finally, the chapter has highlighted the factors that influenced him: his religious and historical background, his relationships with the elites and the Ayyubid kings, and his education.

This chapter has dealt with one type of vital political function carried out by a Muslim woman, according to *Mufarrij*. The next chapter will examine the second possible political role available to women, according to Ibn Wāṣil.

Chapter Four
Women and the Court

Introduction

The previous chapter examined Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of the political role of women, and in particular of *jawārī,* as rulers during the Ayyubid era. This chapter also will focus mainly on the different kinds of political power sought by Muslim women who held authority as regents in the medieval period. In particular, it will discuss Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of the role of the Ayyubid princesses within the framework of the regency system and consider what may have affected his evaluation. This could be done by examining his ability in writing about women as regents in terms of his sources about those Ayyubid regents, and how his language and comments about them compares to his treatment of the Ayyubid males. It is also important to compare his *Mufarrij* with other early historians' reports about the Ayyubid regent women.

Therefore, this chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part introduces the regency system according to Muslim culture in the medieval era and explores this system from various angles. The aim of this part is to discover Ibn Wāṣil's view of this system and his opinion of the concept of the female regent and her function in politics. The second section describes regency as manifested in medieval Islamic history; it considers Ibn Wāṣil's attitude toward regency as a consequence of his background and describes his general assessment of this political phenomenon. The third part, which constitutes the majority of the chapter, evaluates two highly effective women regents in the late Ayyubid dynasty, Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn. The goal of this section is to infer how Ibn Wāṣil presents and evaluates these women's political achievements and what may have affected his assessment of them. The final section concludes with a comparative

evaluation of Ibn Wāṣil's appraisal of the Ayyubid princesses and of Shajar al-Durr. It shows why Ibn Wāṣil favours the regent role in politics for women over that of queen.

Ibn Wāṣil's religious background and the regency system in Islam

This section attempts to give a full picture of the regency system as an essential feature of the Islamic state in the medieval period. This section is divided into two parts: explaining the meaning of regency in Islam and discussing when and why Muslim scholars started to give attention to this position in their works. The aim of this part is to identify, in relation to this system, Ibn Wāṣil's background as a judge and how this knowledge influenced him in his evaluation of the political role of regent women in the Ayyubid reign.

The position of regent in medieval Islamic history: Terms, definitions, and practice

Before exploring the significance of this system in politics, it is important to discuss its meaning in the context of Islamic teachings, for the regency system is found in Islamic law, as will be shown later. This will help in understanding Ibn Wāṣil's position vis-à-vis its role and importance in politics, since there are similarities between the religious and the political aspects of the role of regent.

In Islamic culture there is a concept called *wiṣāya* (custodianship); it comes from the verb *waṣṣā*, which means 'to entrust'. [657] In Islamic law, it refers to one party (*al-mūṣṣī*) granting another party (*al-waṣī*) the ability and duty to take responsibility for the first party's family, assets, and/or property after the first party's death.[658] The *waṣī* can

[657] Sājid Muḥammad al-Zāmlī, 'al-Wiṣā'īya 'alā al-'arsh fī nuẓum al-malakīya: dirāsa muqārana bayn dasātīr duwal Ūrūbbā al-gharbīya wa al-duwal al-'arabīya', *Babylon Magazine*, 17:2 (Kufa, 2009), 466, 469

[658] *al-Mawsū'a al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 43, p. 167.

accept this responsibility or decline it.[659] In jurisprudence *waṣīya* refers to a bequest, as part of a person's last will and testament, which is mainly used to pass on property to parents, children, spouses, and other close relatives. Any individual can make a testament to transfer property to his or her heir, as mentioned in the Quran.[660]

According to this definition it can be said that the concept of regency is found in Islamic law. Furthermore, it can be applied in various arenas such as business and politics. Because regency is a system based on inheritance, it can be implemented within the monarchical system. The child ruler has a right to assume the throne, as inherited from his father; he can be given the title of king, or sultan.[661] Regency can be considered a transitional period during which the regent is enabled to exercise sovereign power. This period ends when the impotence or deficiency of the under-age monarch disappears.[662] The function of the regent's position was to guarantee the continuance of the royal family. This applies in the case where the ruler is young, disabled, or has disappeared.[663]

There are no signs of this system in the early Islamic era. For example, each of the Rightly-guided Caliphs was appointed in a different manner, but they were all elected according to the Islamic legal principle of mutual consultation (*shūrā*), whereby the person deemed most capable was chosen to be the new ruler of the Muslims.[664] Therefore,

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[659] *al-Mawsū'a alfiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 43, p. 168.

[660] In the Quran, there are several verses referring to a last will and testament or a bequest, for example, 'It is prescribed that when death approaches any of you and he has wealth to leave behind, he shall make a will in favour of his parents and relatives equitably. This is a duty for all who fear God' (*The Quran*, 2:180).

[661] al-Nabhān. *Niẓām al-ḥukm*, p. 68; *al-Mawsū'a al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 43, p.172

[662] al-Zāmlī, 'al-Wiṣā'īya 'alā al-'arsh', 467.

[663] Ibid, 466.

[664] When Prophet Muhammad died, his closest companions gathered and chose the Prophet's close friend, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (10-12/632-634), to succeed him as the first Rightly-Guided Caliph. 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb (12-23/634-644) was selected in turn by Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. It might be that the latter's method in choosing a successor opened the door for Muslims to a new way of installing the caliph. 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb died without choosing anyone, but he left the matter to be decided by six of Prophet Muhammad's remaining close companions; they selected 'Uthmān bin 'Affān as the third caliph. When 'Uthmān bin

the regency system was not needed in the early period of Islamic statehood. The way of installing the head of the Islamic state changed during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Muʻāwiyya ibn Abī Sufyān (41-60/661–680), when he appointed his son Yazīd I (60-63/680-683) to be his successor.[665] Although Muʻāwiyya was called 'caliph', his system of ruling resembled a monarchy.[666] He clearly chose the system that best served his desire to keep the throne in his family. Such a development in the ruling system required a replacement for the caliph should he suffer a misfortune. The only solution was the regency system. It is obvious that the Umayyads did not invent it, as it was common in nearby nations such as the Byzantine Empire and the Merovingian dynasty, half of whose kings were young.[667] Therefore, the regency system could come as part and parcel of a monarchical system at that time.

The regency position in the Islamic sources

Surprisingly, most early jurists do not pay much attention to this position. For instance, the most famous representatives exhibited qualities that were portrayed as ideals from a Sunni perspective by the influential Shāfiʻī jurist al-Māwardī (d.437/1058). His book *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* deals with the Islamic constitution and the administration of the Islamic state, including the roles and duties of authorities such as the caliph, vizier

ʻAffān died, the Muslims chose ʻAlī bin Abī Ṭālib to be the fourth caliph. See, al-Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir al-ināfa fī ma'ālim al-khilāfa*, ed. ʻAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, 2nd edn, 13 vols. (Kuwayt: Maṭbaʻat Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 2010) vol. 1, pp. 82, 88, 94, 100; ʻAbd Allāh ibn Asʻad al-Yāfiʻī, *Mir'āt al-jinān wa-'ibrat al-yaqẓān fī ma'rifat ḥawādith al-zamān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmīya, 1997), pp. 53, 60, 70, 80; Muḥammad ibn ʻAlī Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *Kitāb al-fakhrī fī al-ādāb al-sulṭānīya wa-al-duwal al-islāmīya* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), pp. 96-98; Ṣāliḥ ibn Fawzān al-Fawzān, *al-I'lām bi-kayfīyat tanṣīb al-imām: wa yalīhi majmū'at min al-as'ila al-muhimma ḥawla al-mawḍū'* (Riyadh: Mu'assasa al-Daʻwa al-Khayrīya, 2013), p. 5.

[665] al-Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir al-ināfa,* vol. 1, p. 116, Yūsuf al-ʻAsh, *al-Dawla al-Umawīya wa al-aḥdāth allatī sabaqtaha wa mahhdat laha ibtidā'an min fitnat 'Uthmān* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1980), p .77.

[666] al-Qalqashandīl, *Ma'āthir al-ināfa,* vol. 1, p. 111; Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *Kitāb al-fakhrī,* p. 106.

[667] One example of this was Anna of Savoy (741-747/1341-1347), a Byzantine Empress consort, as the second spouse of Andronikos III Palaiologos (728-741/1328 -1341) [Jennifer Lawler, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Middle Ages* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), p. 18]; Konrad Hirschler, '"He is a child and this land is a borderland of Islam": Under-age rule and the quest for political stability in the Ayyubid period', *Al-Masaq*,19/1 (London: Routledge, March 2007), pp. 29-46 (p. 30).

(*wazīr*), emir (prince), and other positions in the Islamic state, but does not mention the regent.[668] It seems that the lack of any information about the regent's position in the jurists' accounts in the medieval period may be due to the fact that one of the conditions for becoming caliph is that he should be an adult.[669] Obviously, having a minor as ruler runs contrary to such a condition. Furthermore, it may also have been the case that the jurists did not support the monarchy. As religious people, they probably preferred the methods followed by the Rightly-guided Caliphs in installing the caliph or his representative.[670] Indeed, this move by Muʻāwiyya faced objection from some elites and even from some chroniclers, such as al- Masʻūdī (d. 344/956), who criticised it heavily.[671] Even most modern scholars do not consider the regency system in their work. *Niẓām al-ḥukm fī al-Islām* by Muḥammad Fārūq al-Nabhān, for example, is a substantial book which gives detailed information about the political landscape of Islamic thought about the administrative system in the state: it does not mention anything about regency.[672] It might be that modern scholars merely have followed the older generation in dealing with the same topics of the administration of the Islamic state. The content of al-Nabhān's work is similar to that of al-Māwardī.

It seems that scholars started to pay attention and to record this system more recently. For instance, there are two useful articles that deal with the regency system, albeit in modern history. The first one is '*al-Wiṣā'īya ʻalā al-ʻarsh fī nuẓum al-malakīya: dirāsa muqārana bayn dasātīr duwal Ūrūbbā al-gharbīya wa al-duwal al-ʻarabīya*' by

[668] al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniya*.

[669] Sanhūrī, *Fiqh al-khilāfa*, pp. 109-110.

[670] Hirschler, 'Under-age rule', 37.

[671] Abī ʻAlī bin al-Ḥusayn bin ʻAlī al-Masʻūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʻādin al-jawhar*, 4 vols (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʻAṣrīya, 2005). vol. 3, p. 62.

[672] Muḥammad Fārūq al-Nabhān. *Niẓām al-ḥukm fī al-Islām, dirāsa tataḍaman maʻālim al-niẓām al-siyāsī al-islāmī wa maṣādir wa al-sulṭāt al-ʻāmma fīhi* (Kuwait: Maṭbūʻāt Jāmiʻat al-Kuwayt, 1974).

Sājid Muḥammad al-Zāmlī (2009).[673] The second, about regency in Morocco, is *al-Mumkin wa al-mustab'ad fī al-qānūn al-tanẓīmī li-majlis al-wiṣā'īy* by Muḥammad Mūnshīḥ (2013).[674] These two articles depended on what is enshrined in the legal codes of modern nations regarding regency. It seems that scholars started to include the regency system in their accounts once modern states wrote specific regulations about it. This occurred in countries that retained a monarchical system into the post-colonial era.[675] The modern system of regency in each state certainly has been shaped by historical particularities. The only 'update' is that the regulations have been formally encoded into these countries' constitutions. Over time, this system developed and was incorporated into the traditional administration of Islamic government.

It can be said that Ibn Wāṣil's knowledge about the regency system was based mainly on the aforementioned information about *waṣīya* in the Quran, in which the regent's rights and duties are presented. This was due to the similarity between the role of regent based on Islamic law and the role of regent in the political arena. Although there was no information in the jurists' books about this system—to the best of the researcher's knowledge—, Ibn Wāṣil is familiar with women regents and their impact on the political history of Muslims in medieval period, as will be shown in the following passages.

Female regency in Islamic history

There are many examples of regent women in medieval Islamic history. This section will consider some of the more famous female regents from that period. The aim of this section is to show what Ibn Wāṣil heard and read about these women and to assess

[673] al-Zāmlī, 'al-Wiṣāya 'alā al-'arsh', 467.

[674] Muḥammad Mūnshīḥ, 'al-Mumkin wa al-mustab'ad fī al-qānūn al-tanẓīmī li-majlis al-wiṣāya', *Al-Wafid Press*, 2013, online articl, < http://alwafid.press.ma/maroc-7768.html#.VYGPD_mqqkq> [accessed 15 May 2017]

[675] al-Zāmlī, 'al-Wiṣāya 'alā al-'arsh', 468.

to what extent he judged those women to have been successful or to have failed in ruling their states. This investigation can reveal how the trajectories of their careers affected Ibn Wāṣil in his evaluation of the role of the regent woman in the Ayyubid era, and to conclude, on which level he put the Ayyubid regent women in comparison to the following notable women.

Some modern historians such as ʻIṣām ʻUqla have been suspicious of the female regent's intentions, accusing her of having occupied this position illegally. In his opinion, the regent woman took advantage of young children in order to exercise her own power, without any official authorization.[676] This belief can be considered only partly correct, as there are many examples of regent women who played crucial roles in improving the conditions of their kingdoms. Sitt al-Mulk is one such example: in 411/1020, she played a significant role in Fatimid politics.[677] This was when her brother al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (387-411/ 996–1021) died. He is well known in history for having instigated problematic regulations, which allowed women to be aggressively mistreated.[678] Indeed, his own sister, Sitt al-Mulk, was badly affected by his policies.[679] His reign ended when he disappeared in a mysterious way.[680] It is worth indicating that he had appointed his cousin

[676] ʻIṣām ʻUqla, ʻal-Marʼa wa al-sulṭa fī al-Islam: al-khūātīn al-saljūqīyyāt' (447-511/1055-1117), *Dirāsāt al-ʻulūm al-insānīya wa al-ijtimāʻīya*, 34, 2007, 793-807 (793).

[677] Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 116.

[678] Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʻAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Itiʼāẓ al-ḥunafāʼ bi-akhbār al-aʼimma al-khulafāʼ al-Fāṭimīyīn*, ed. by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl and Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʻlá lil-Shuʼūn al-Islāmīya, 1996), vol. 2, p. 119; Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, p. 192.

[679] Ībrāhīm Ayyūb, *al-Tārīkh al-Fāṭimī al-siyāsī* (Beirut: al-Sharika al-ʻĀlamīya lil-Kitāb, 1997), p. 44; Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, pp. 120-121.

[680] al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allah went out as usual to roam about the Muqattam Hills, where he was eager to monitor the stars. He rode his donkey and was escorted by two servants. It was there that he disappeared, never to be seen again. The story of his disappearance is said to be similar to a myth. For more information, see al-Maqrīzī, *Itiʼāẓ al-ḥunafāʼ,* vol. 2, pp. 115-117, and Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 4, p. 248.

‘Abd al-Rahim bin Ilyās as his heir instead of his minor son.[681] But Sitt al-Mulk was able to take control during this difficult period and she worked to install his son al-Ẓāhir (411-427/1021-1036) as caliph after his father. The new caliph was still young, on the threshold of sixteen years of age.[682] He was inspired by his aunt, and under her influence he removed many of the decrees issued by his father.[683] In addition, Sitt al-Mulk appears to have played a crucial role as a politician at that time. This political role was not a new experience for her, as she had practiced it during the reign of her father, al-‘Azīz Billāh (344-386/ 955-996), who was influenced by her opinion on some occasions.[684] Therefore, she was able to consolidate the Fatimid state through her intelligence, understanding, and subtlety.[685] She continued for some years after the disappearance of her brother to manage the state’s affairs successfully, until she died at the end of the year 414/1023.[686]

Sitt al-Mulk’s story illustrates that, at certain times in history, women have sought to play a part in politics and demonstrated their abilities to succeed in this domain. The regent women may not necessarily have meant to assume this role as a marker of prestige or to compete with men on what was considered to be male territory; rather, they may have found themselves in a position to solve or alleviate many of the problems caused by men which had resulted in injustices towards women. It might be that the successful steps

[681] Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ‘Inān, *al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh wa-asrār al-da`wa al-Fāṭimiya*, 3rd edn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanaji, 1983), p.184.

[682] Ayyūb. *al-Tārīkh al-Fāṭimī*, pp. 47-48.

[683] al-Maqrīzī, *Iti'āẓ al-ḥunafā'*, vol. 2, p. 126; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 354.

[684] During the reign of her father the Christian and Jewish elites had a considerable influence on his internal policy, but in a negative way. When he discovered this he arrested them and had them punished. Due to pressure from his daughter and his Christian wife he then released those elites, and he reassigned them to different positionsso as to avoid the repetition of their former mistakes (‘Inān, *al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh*, p. 81).

[685] ‘Inān, *al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh*, p. 88.

[686] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 4, p. 248: Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, pp. 124-125. Instead of respecting Sitt al-Mulk’s wise policies, however, some early historians have accused her of killing her brother. Even al-Maqrīzī, despite being impressed her policies, suspected that she played a role in her brother’s death: without any further investigation, he transmits other historians’ narratives about her supposed role in killing her brother. al-Maqrīzī, *Iti'āẓ al-ḥunafā'*, vol. 2, p. 115.

taken by Sitt al-Mulk affected the position of women as regents: it encouraged other women to aspire to the same station in other parts of the Islamic world. Seljuk women, for instance, enjoyed a privileged position compared to other women in the former period of Islamic history.[687] This went back to their Turkish origin, which gave women a position of respect in society. In their tribe, women shared many duties with their husbands, even in times of war.[688] This granted Seljuk women a legal status via which they were able to practise politics.[689] Turkān Khātūn, the mother of Maḥmūd bin Mulk Shāh (485-487/1092-1094), serves as an example of such a woman.[690] She had an enormous impact on her husband.[691] During his life she had her own administration and staff; she also had her own fiefdom, and this was to be able to pay the salaries of her staff.[692] When her husband died, her powerful position allowed her to use her money to gain the loyalty of courtiers and members of the nobility despite the power of her tribe.[693] Thus, she was able to appoint her son after some conflict between her and the half-brothers of her son.[694] It is expected that political participation by Seljuk women brought about a significant change in the status of regent women in medieval history. Those Seljuk women in the historical record were strong and adapted many methods to attain their dreams; they were also wise

[687] 'Uqla, 'al-Mar'a wa al-sulṭa fī al-Islam', 793-794.

[688] 'Uqla, 'al-Mar'a wa al-sulṭa', 793-794; Zahrā' Muḥsin Ḥasan al-Ḥasanī, 'Al-amīrāt al-saljūqīyyāt wa dawruhun al-siyāsī wa al-'askarī ḥattā sanat 500/ 1106', *al-Majallat al-Kullīya al-Islamīya al- Jāmi'a*, 1/1 (Najaf: al-Kullīya al-Islamīya, 2006) pp. 11-38, 13.

[689] 'Uqla, 'al-Mar'a wa al-sulṭa', 793.

[690] Taj al-Din 'Alī bin Anjab Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā': al-musammā jihāt al-a'imma al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa-al-imā'*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, n.d), p. 132.

[691] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 151; Zaynab Fawwāz, *Kitāb al-durr al-manthūr fī ṭabaqāt rabbāt al-khudūr* (Kuwait: Maktabat Ibn Qutayba, 2014), p. 183; al-Ḥasanī, 'al-Amīrāt al-saljūqīyyāt', p. 18.

[692] al-Ḥasanī, 'al-Amīrāt al-saljūqīyyāt', p. 19; 'Uqla, 'al-Mar'a wa al-sulṭa', 795.

[693] Ibn al–Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 151; al-Ḥasanī, 'al-Amīrāt al-saljūqīyyāt', p. 20.

[694] Ṣadr al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī bin Nāṣir al-Ḥusaynī, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh: akhbār al-umarā' wa-al-mulūk al-saljūqīya*, ed. Muḥammad Nūr al-Dīn, 2nd edn (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1986), p. 155; Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, p. 132; Fawwāz, *Kitāb al-durr al-manthūr*, p. 185.

in their financial dealings and formed good relationships with the military. These two elements were enough to help them to control the state. The Seljuk women seem to have brought about improvements in the position of regent women, a phenomenon which was at its peak during the time of the Ayyubid princesses, as will be shown later in this chapter.

However, ‘Iṣām ‘Uqla’s claims about regent women cannot be ignored. Certainly, not all regent women were capable or good actors. As with any male regent, they might have caused damage to their children’s situations. A prime example of this was the *jāriyā* Ṣubḥ in Andalusia. Her son was the caliph Hishām Mu’ayyad (366-403/976-1013) and she became his regent after the death of Caliph al-Ḥakam al-Mustanṣir (350-366/ 961-976).[695] She held an elevated position during the latter's life. Surprisingly, her master never married her, despite her place in his heart.[696] Nevertheless, being a mother of the young caliph allowed her access to power. Ṣubḥ was appointed regent for her son, who was eleven years and ten months old at the time; she attained this position with the help of a vizier, Muḥammad bin Abī ‘Āmir, with whom she had fallen in love. She then allowed this vizier to become the de facto head of state.[697] As a consequence, the child caliph held his position only nominally.[698] These developments made her realize that the seriousness of the events had become a danger to her son’s position on the throne. She

[695] Ibn ‘Adharaī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, ed by. J. S. Colan and E. Lévi-Provençal, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1983), vol. 2, p. 253.

[696] Ibn ‘Adharaī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 2, p. 368; Ībrāhīm Bayḍūn, *al-Dawla al-‘arabīya fī Isbānbiyā: min al-faṭh ḥattā suqūṭ al-khilāfa* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabīya lil-Ṭibā‘a wa-al-Nashr, 1980), p. 342; Roger Boase, ‘Arab influences on European love-poetry,’ in *The legacy of Muslim Spain*, 2 vols., Manuela Marín and Salma Khadra Jayyusi (eds.) vol. 1, (Brill, 1994), pp. 457-481, 463.

[697] Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ‘Anān, *Dawlat al-Islām fī al-Andalus*, 4th edn , 5 vols (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 525-526; Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, p. 109.

[698] Ibn ‘Adharaī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 2, p. 386; Bayḍūn, *al-Dawla al-‘arabīya fī Isbānbiyā*, pp. 342-343.

made efforts to destroy Muḥammad bin Abī ʻĀmir, but she failed.[699] She retired and resigned herself to the fate of her son being ousted, having herself contributed to this state of affairs. She died in ignominy: not even the date of her death has been recorded.[700] Another example of a bad actor in a female regent was the Seljuk Zubayda Khātūn, the mother of Barkyārūq (485-495/1092-1101), who left her alcoholic son to his drink in order to attend to her own business.[701] Some historians, such as al-Iṣfahānī, criticise her heavily and attribute the failure of Barkyārūq to her neglect of him.[702]

Indeed, ʻUqla falls into the generalization trap in his assessment, and as a result his judgement is unbalanced. One or two bad models of regent women cannot be said to represent the overall picture of the role of regent women. As with male regents, they were sometimes greedy for power. Seeking power is a common human desire and is not limited to a particular gender, ethnic group, or culture. One famous example is the Byzantine Empress Irene (163-186/797- 802), the wife of Leo IV (158-163/775-780).[703] After her husband's death, Irene became the regent of her ten-year-old son Constantine VI (163-181/775-797) and reigned as co-emperor with him.[704] When Constantine came of age, however, he tried to wrest control of the empire from his mother. Through skilful handling of the clergy and the men of the court, however, Irene conspired against her son, and eventually ordered that he be arrested and blinded.[705] In general, most regent woman would not have been able to overcome their maternal instincts as Irene did. Furthermore,

[699] Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, p. 116.

[700] ʻAnān, *Dawlat al-Islām fī al-Andalus*, pp. 556-557.

[701] Ibn al-Sāʻī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, p. 132; al-Ḥusaynī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, p. 160.

[702] ʻImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, 'Tārīkh dawlat Āl-Saljūq', in *Kitāb al-barq al-shāmī*, abridged, ed. by al-Fatḥ al-Bundārī (Cairo: Maṭbaʻat al-Mawsūʻāt, 1900), p. 77; 'Uqla, 'al-Mar'a wa al-sulṭa', p. 802.

[703] Theophanes (the Confessor), *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 132.

[704] Judith Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 198.

[705] Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp.140, 150; Herrin, *Unrivalled influence*, pp. 194 & 199.

comparing between men and women, there are many examples of male regents who destroyed the lives of their rivals in order to keep authority under their control.[706] On the other hand, it is noticeable that of those bad examples of women regents, some were either careless or were distracted by their lovers from the business of ruling. This might lead some modern scholars such as Muḥammad al-Bahy, who discusses the political role of women, to believe that women cannot be successful at holding any political position.[707] Indeed, women, like men, can be unjust even with those closest to them, and an oppressor may be a man or a woman. Conversely, there are many examples of women who were much better rulers than their male counterparts: Ḍayfa Khātūn was a wise woman who governed more effectively than other contemporary Ayyubid monarchs, as will be shown in this chapter.

It can be understood from the presentation above that Ibn Wāṣil knew that the real emergence of women's political role as regent began with Sitt al-Mulk. This position improved with time, and eventually the female regent became an official position in the Ayyubid dynasty. She acted independently, as is reported in *Mufarrij,* which will be shown later in this chapter. Indeed, the examples of women prior to the Ayyubids who had acted as regents, whether successfully or not, were on Ibn Wāṣil's mind: it seems he compared them with the Ayyubid regent women and assessed the latter based on his knowledge of the former. He probably compared the Ayyubid princesses with the other female regents as well as with male regents, whether contemporaries or predecessors. It seems that the examples which he studied gave him the impression that an Ayyubid woman regent might be loyal or disloyal to the child king.

[706] This point will be shown later in this chapter.

[707] Jabr, *al-Mar'a*, p. 69.

The regency system in the Ayyubid era based on Mufarrij

It is vital to give a brief description of the pattern of regency in Muslim states, especially in the Ayyubid dynasty. As indicated earlier, no clear record has been found regarding regency in that period; therefore, an attempt is made to sketch an image of it during the Ayyubid reign through two main sources: first, by consulting *Mufarrij* in order to extract greater knowledge about it in this period, and second, by examining the religious concept of *wiṣāya*, as the idea of *wiṣāya* in Islamic law is similar to the political version of *wiṣāya* in terms of the duties and characteristics of the regent. This part will help at the end of this chapter to measure to what extent the Ayyubid women were, in Ibn Wāṣil's view, able to execute their political roles in a sufficient way.

It is supposed that the Ayyubid dynasty inherited the regency system from earlier dynasties, especially the Abbasid, as part of the political system.[708] They also followed the procedures used by other Islamic dynasties to prepare their children for such political eventualities, as indicated previously. The Abbasids, for example, routinely selected a specific person (*mu'addib*) to instruct their children and to prepare them for political life.[709] This person would have had a considerable impact on a young prince; therefore, he would be personally chosen by the caliph and had to follow special protocols in caring for and teaching the child.[710] For the Ayyubids this role was performed by the atabeg. The atabeg's duties seemed to be similar to those of the Abbasids' *mu'addib*.[711] According to Ibn Wāṣil's record it appears that the atabeg was more likely than other members of the dynasty to be named regent. Thus, the Ayyubid rulers were keen to choose the most

[708] Hirschler, 'Under-age Rule', 29.

[709] Muḥammad 'Īsā Ṣāliḥīya, 'Muʿaddibu al-umarā' fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī al-awwal 861-750/247-132', *al-'Arabīya lil-'ulūm al-insānīya*, 5/2, 43-96 (Kuwait: Kuwait University, 1982), p. 44.

[710] Ṣāliḥīya, 'Muʿaddibu al-Umarā'', 70-80.

[711] This point is beyond the scope of this thesis. For more information, see Ṣāliḥīya, 'Muʿaddibu al-umarā''.

trusted and honest person, and they had their own protocol. Ibn Wāṣil seems to give serious attention to this system. This is clear from his depiction of King al-ʻAzīz Muḥammad of Aleppo, when he refers to the Ayyubid protocols:

> It was in his opinion and the opinion of his father and descendants—may God have mercy on them all—that when a prince passed away, he would have appointed his son to be his successor. If the son is still a minor, a trusteeship council is authorised to educate and train the boy until he becomes eligible to assume power. The trusteeship council was authorized to govern in the interim period. Also, they had a similar opinion regarding the educators, teachers, and senior officials. They inherited this approach from their grandfather, Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, may God have mercy on them all.[712]

Through his record, Ibn Wāṣil not only gives information about the processes of the regency system to provide political training, but he also appears to support it strongly, as he might consider it the perfect way to keep the throne. He seems to be of the opinion that this approach was one of the Ayyubids' virtues. In his *Mufarrij* the Ayyubids were aware of the potential dangers if the regent was one of the family members. This certainly is a point taken into account by the rulers. For instance, in the Ayyubid dynasty a king would designate whomever he deemed the most trustworthy person as regent for the crown prince, and it might be his closest friend from the administrative class, the military elite, or even Ayyubid women, rather than any male member of his own family.[713] It was likely due to the deep conflicts among the members of the dynasty that forced them to prefer the closest friend. On the other hand, if the regent was not honest or loyal, the consequences could be serious. King al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr I removed the underage King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad al-ʻAzīz ʻUthmān, the grandchild of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, in 596/1200.[714] He

[712] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 117.

[713] Hirschler, 'Under-age Rule', 42.

[714] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 152.

assumed power for his own line of descendants.[715] Also in 648/1250, the Mamluk al-Muʿizz Aybak was chosen to be regent for the young Ayyubid King al-Ashraf in reaction to the Muslims rejecting Shajar al-Durr's authority.[716] In 652/1254, al-Muʿizz Aybak removed the young king and took over governance himself.[717] In this way, King al-Muʿizz Aybak also removed the presence of Ayyubid authority from Egypt forever, and transferred it to the Mamluks. So, the Ayyubids sometimes appointed the atabegs of their children as regents. This might be because the atabeg is a constant companion to the young king for many of the latter's formative years, which could generate emotional attachment not only on the part of the child, but also parental feelings on the part of the atabeg toward the child. In addition, it may be because the father king could observe the atabeg's manner with his child, and if he was pleased with what he saw, it might give him peace of mind about the future of his state. It seems that this tactic was successful and was one of the reasons that helped to safeguard the Ayyubid throne until the young king become able to practice his role as a head of the Islamic state. The evidence of this can be found in the histories of Aleppo, Homs, and Hama. The young kings stayed in power until they became adults capable of ruling independently. The best example of this is al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II of Hama; when his father died he was ten years old, he ruled around forty-one years, and the King of Homs al-Mujāhid Asad al-Dīn was twelve years old; his reign was the longest in Ayyubid history, about fifty-six years. This means that the Ayyubids managed to reduce the probability of losing sovereignty in the father kings' descent.

[715] Mūnshīḥ, 'al-Mumkin wa al-mustabʿad'.

[716] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 158.

[717] Ibid, p. 179.

Saving the throne by atabeg regent is not a sufficient long-term strategy, however; in some cases the atabeg could attack the throne. Ibn Wāṣil understood this political system; therefore, he highlights two kinds of regents: he furnishes examples of the power-hungry regent, to show the extent to which the regent can affect the state. In his evaluation, the most egregious case of a harmful regent was the freedman Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', regent of King al-Qāhir bin Nūr al-Dīn Arslān Shāh (607-615/1210-1218), King of Mosul and the last member of the Zangid dynasty.[718] Ibn Wāṣil expresses his disapproval of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' by commenting:

> When King bin al-Qāhir died, Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'—his father's Mamluk—dominated Mosul. He installed the king's sons on the throne one after the other, but as figureheads only. When the second son died, Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' took over the governance.[719]

In contrast with the above regent type, the most exemplary regent in Ibn Wāṣil's estimation was probably the atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril, regent of King al-'Azīz, who assumed the regency when the child king was two years and some months old.[720] As usual, Ibn Wāṣil supports his opinion with evidence, as in the following excerpt:

> In this year, six hundred and twenty eight, King al-'Azīz—God have mercy on him—controlled the monarchy with the best conduct. He was eighteen years old. His atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril—May God reward him with the best—handed him [control of] the treasuries. [...] The atabeg had not left the citadel from [the time of] the death of King al-Ẓāhir Abū al-Fatḥ Ghāzī until this date. He stayed in the citadel for about 15 years. May God reward him with good. We have not heard in the histories of anyone like him in giving advice in service of his pupil's house and doing as he did. Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' of the Zangid dynasty was the opposite of Shihāb al-Dīn in his actions. On the Day of Judgment God will requite each one according to his deed.[721]

Ibn Wāṣil continues his depiction of Shihāb al-Dīn:

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[718] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 206.

[719] Ibid, vol. 5, p. 50.

[720] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 253; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 297.

[721] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 309.

> Shihāb al-Dīn visited the citadel from time to time until King al-'Azīz married his cousin, the daughter of his uncle King al-Kāmil. Shihāb al-Dīn stayed there for a period, then he left the citadel and lived in his own house until his death, God have mercy on him. His house is called 'Ayn Tāb, it is located toward the castle's door.[722]

Many early historians agree with Ibn Wāṣil in his assessment about Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril; the contemporary historian Ibn al-Jawzī also counts this loyal atabeg as an ideal example of an honest regent.[723] Ibn al-Athīr says in his evaluation of Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril 'It is shameful when the conduct of a man unrelated by blood is the best among kings and their sons in dealing with the citizen… I have never known up to now any Muslim ruler better than him…'[724] This corroboration from Ibn al-Jawzī indicates that there is no personal factor influencing Ibn Wāṣil's attitude about the atabeg.

It is clear that Ibn Wāṣil's admiration of the atabeg encouraged him to write in detail about Shihāb al-Dīn's career as regent. Ibn Wāṣil describes the atabeg's intense devotion to the king in addition to what he did for Aleppo. First, he ensured the state's prestige throughout the duration of his regency. King al-Ashraf Mūsā was in charge of protecting Aleppo by order of his father, Sultan al-'Ādil Abū Bakr I.[725] The atabeg held the reins on matters of state and did not allow anybody to assume that coveted role in Aleppo, even King al-Ashraf Mūsā himself, who was the strongest of the kings allied to Aleppo. 'He remained in Aleppo to manage its affairs. He could not do anything without constant consultation with the atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl.'[726] Second, it seems that the atabeg maintained Aleppo's power among the other Ayyubid states as it had been during his master's reign. In 618/1221, the king of Hama, al-Nāṣir bin al-Manṣūr (587-618/1191–

[722] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 309.

[723] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 344.

[724] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 312.

[725] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 327; Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 134.

[726] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 23.

1221) asked the atabeg to support him against his uncle al-Kāmil Muḥammad and to help him to gain the support of King al-Ashraf. 'He sent word to the atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl. The atabeg responded and sent him to King al-Ashraf to take the oath from him to protect him (al-Nāṣir) from anyone—of his enemies—who might attack him.'[727] This anecdote illustrates the place of Aleppo under the atabeg's supervision.

Third, Shihāb al-Dīn was a loyal supporter of the Ayyubids; his policies were aligned with theirs. During his reign, Aleppo contributed to the most important events of that time, including quashing many threats to the Muslim world. He gave his support to King al-Kāmil Muḥammad during the fifth crusade in 615/1218, when the Crusaders arrived to attack Damietta.[728] The atabeg was one of those who responded to this call from al-Kāmil Muḥammad. Ibn Wāṣil comments, 'The atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl sent a strong army'.[729] Fourth, the atabeg kept his respect, loyalty, and devotion to his master King al-Ẓāhir. This is expressed by what is reported in *Mufarrij* on the events of the year 620/1223.

> In this year the coffin of the Sultan King al-Ẓāhir Ghiyāth al-Dīn was moved from the room where he was buried to the dome of the school that was built for him by the atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl. Then he was [re]buried there.[730]

Fifth, he took care to safeguard the state and secure it against enemy attacks, as occurred in 621/1224:

> In this year some towers in Aleppo's castle wall were damaged […]. The atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl was personally involved in rebuilding and

[727] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 93.

[728] See Chapter Two, 'Historical background'.

[729] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 92.

[730] Ibid, p. 128.

> equipping it with the necessary tools and instruments until it was completed.[731]

From Ibn Wāṣil's depiction above he shows two things about Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl. First, he stresses why he considers the atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl the best (male) regent during the Ayyubid age. Based on his account in *Mufarrij*, he kept his good relationship with King al-Ashraf Mūsā, and at the same time he did not allow the king to interfere in Aleppo's internal affairs. Furthermore, he maintained the strength of Aleppo as it was established by King al-Ẓāhir Ghiyāth al-Dīn. Also, he followed the general policy of the Ayyubid rulers and did not deviate from it. Finally, he remained loyal to his master and to the young king. Second, Ibn Wāṣil refers to the regent's duties toward the underage king and his state: it is obvious that the regent in the Ayyubid era could act as an absolute monarch. He was expected to do anything to safeguard the young child's throne. Based on Ibn Wāṣil's report it could be said that there were no clear limitations on the regent's powers in the Ayyubid dynasty. He never mentions in the entirety of his text any facts that clarify the regent's authority. That example showed that the regent in the Ayyubid era enjoyed the same powers as the king.

There are no specific duties for the *waṣī* in Islamic law; he or she should be responsible for the orphan's life and property. There are several verses in the Quran that discuss the relationship between the *waṣī* and the young child; not one of them mentions limits on the scope of the *waṣī*. For instance,

> And try orphans [as regards their intelligence] until they reach the age of marriage; if then you find sound judgement in them, release their property to them, but consume it not wastefully and hastily, fearing that they should grow up; and whoever amongst guardians is rich, he should take no wages [for this responsibility], but if he is poor, let him have for himself what is

[731] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, p. 141.

> just and reasonable. And when you release their property to them, bring witnesses in their presence; and Allah is All-Sufficient in taking account.[732]

This verse involves some important points. The young king in Islamic law is considered an orphan and his regent is his supervisor and vicegerent of the king's entire property. Therefore, all conditions that apply to the *waṣī* of young children also apply to the king's *waṣī*. It refers to characteristics of the *waṣī* since the regent would be responsible in lieu of the monarch; the regent has to meet several criteria. According to this verse the regent must have absolute loyalty, commitment, and should not be incompetent or a traitor. The regent should look out for the interests of the child monarch and protect the latter's inheritance.[733] It can be also deduced from the verse that the young king must be an adult to be capable of assuming his or her tasks.[734] These criteria would be the same whether from a religious or political standpoint. When these ideals are not met, the regent might place his or her own interests above those of the monarch and the state.

Ibn Wāṣil presents two kinds of regents at opposite extremes: the very worst and the very best. Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' in Ibn Wāṣil's account was a dishonest regent. However, he was successful as a politician. In *Mufarrij*, Ibn Wāṣil states, '…he was a good politician, both firm and generous'.[735] It was a unique quality of Ibn Wāṣil's that his evaluation of any person of authority was not unduly affected by that person's mistakes or bad political behaviour. It seems that the strong rejection by Ibn Wāṣil of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu's deeds was due to two concerns. First, as an educated person and in-depth observer

[732] *Q*, 2:6.

[733] *al-Mawsū'a al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 43, p.174; Mūnshīḥ, 'al-Mumkin wa al-mustab'ad'.

[734] al-Zāmlī, '*al-Wiṣāya 'alā al-'arsh'*, 472.

[735] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 4, p. 25.

of political events during his time, he considers Badr al-Dīn's actions to have represented unethical political behaviour that critically affected the Zangid dynasty to the extent of eliminating it altogether. Second, as a religious person, he would have viewed this deed as against the principles of Islam. The same factors also affected Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation of Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughrīl. What is more, it has been stated earlier that Ibn Wāṣil's mission in writing his *Mufarrij* was not only to report on events, but also to transmit political lessons. Thus, through Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation of Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril and Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', he gives some examples of how the regent must and must not conduct himself in his duties to the child monarch and the throne. Ibn Wāṣil clearly highlights and justifies his attitude toward each regent.

Based on the foregoing, it is of note that in his capacity as a Shāfi'ī judge Ibn Wāṣil gives his dedicated support to the institution of regency as an appropriate solution to having a vacant throne with no adult monarch. As a judge, he would have had a deep understanding of the system of regency and he would have known about the rights and duties of the regent. Also from the political aspect, in his *Mufarrij* he expresses his knowledge about this system. Moreover, he also demarcates the standards which he considers to be the features of an ideal regent. He thinks that the regent in politics has a similar role as the regent in Islamic law. Ibn Wāṣil believes that a regent has similar authority to that of a king, even if the regent is a woman.

The Ayyubid princesses as regents according to Ibn Wāṣil

Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn were the only regent women in the Ayyubid dynasty, and they exemplified a new type of woman who was able to assume power. The sections which follow will paint a description of the life of Ḍayfa Khātūn as informed by the writings of chroniclers and modern scholars. This portrait will consider her childhood

in order to understand who had an impact on her early life, leading to the development of her unique character. Her policies with respect to both friends and foes will be detailed, to assist in evaluating why Ibn Wāṣil held her in such esteem in his political appraisal.

Subsequently, Ghāzīyya Khātūn will be discussed. Her reign as regent is notable for its policy of non-aggression and avoidance of conflicts with other political forces. This might explain why she has not received as much attention by contemporary historians as has Ḍayfa Khātūn. However, she was able to govern Hama safely and effectively until her death. As with Ḍayfa Khātūn, Ghāzīyya's life and legacy will be examined closely, and according to the views of Ibn Wāṣil himself.

Ḍayfa Khātūn 633-640/1236-1243 According to Ibn Wāṣil

Ḍayfa Khātūn in historiography

Indeed, to the best of the researcher's knowledge the history of the Ayyubid women has not been the focus of any noteworthy studies. Although Ḍayfa Khātūn is considered to have been one of the leading figures to have positively shaped the end of the Ayyubid dynasty, there is a noticeable lack of information on her career in medieval Islamic sources and the writings of modern scholars. Figure 2 shows the amount of writing about Ḍayfa Khātūn in *Mufarrij* compared with other histories.

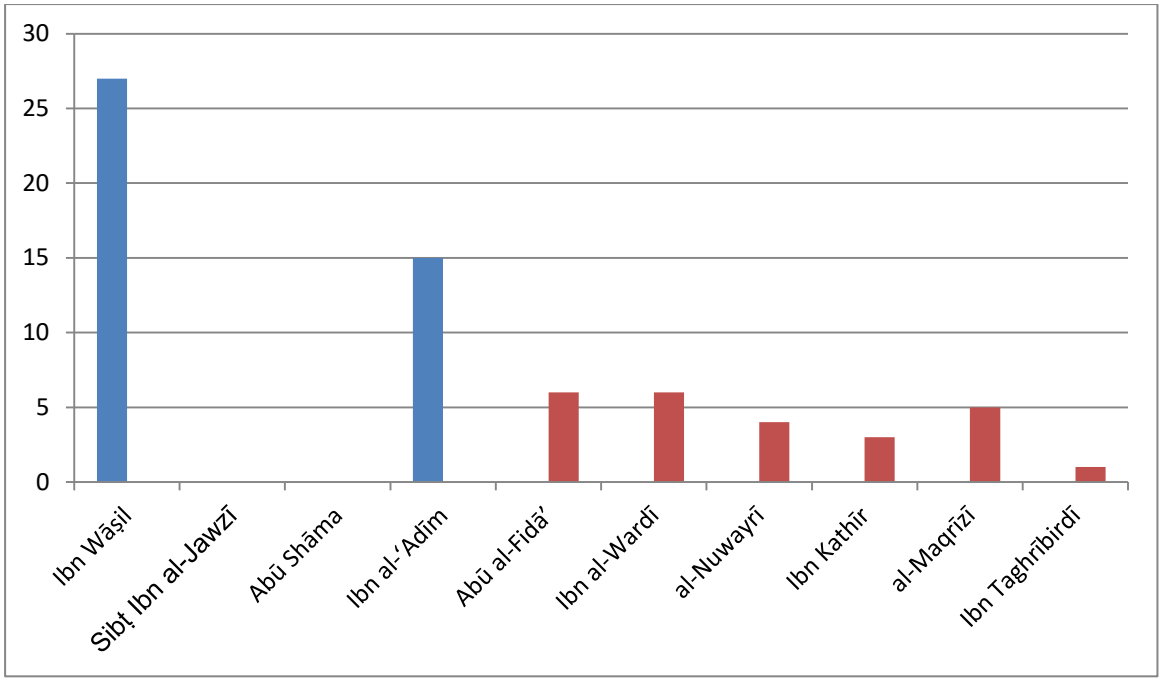

***Figure 2**. Number of mentions of Ḍayfa Khātūn in contemporary and near-contemporary historians' works.*

A small survey of the text represented in this chart provides data for an assessment about the place of Ibn Wāṣil among other historians in writing about Ḍayfa Khātūn. Generally speaking, all the above historians used the terms 'the Aleppan', 'the army of Aleppo', and 'the owner of Aleppo' to refer to any political action during the regency period of Ḍayfa Khātūn. Ibn Wāṣil and Ibn al-'Adīm however, mention her name directly. Ibn al-'Adīm's *Zubdat al-Ḥalab* is arguably the best source on the life of Ḍayfa Khātūn, due to the fact that the historian lived among the Aleppine statesmen. The other noteworthy source is *Mufarrij*. Ibn Wāṣil reports on the life of Ḍayfa Khātūn as seriously as he does with the Ayyubid kings. Interestingly, there are similarities between Ibn al-'Adīm and Ibn Wāṣil in their depictions of the events during the time of Ḍayfa Khātūn. This would have occurred either by oral transmission from Ibn al-'Adīm to Ibn Wāṣil, as the latter clearly mentions such exchanges in *Mufarrij*, for instance 'Ibn al-'Adīm told

me'[736] or 'Ibn al-'Adīm said'[737], or it might have been by Ibn Wāṣil copying certain details from Ibn al-'Adīm's manuscript. Similarities are evident in the construction and recording of the same events in the same order. El-Azharī indicates that Ibn al-'Adīm's book is the only detailed source on Ḍayfa Khātūn.[738] However, there is not much difference between the two sources in terms of the details. In fact, the author of *Mufarrij* adds some details, such as definitions, his own knowledge of the events, and some additional comments, that are not found in Ibn al-'Adīm's account. These features are characteristic of Ibn Wāṣil's historical accounts. For example, he writes about the death of Aleppo's judge, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh, in the events of the year 640/1242, in the same way as Ibn al-'Adīm, but he adds small details about the life and the personality of the judge.[739] Based on this it can be said that although Ibn Wāṣil was not a courtier of Ḍayfa Khātūn, he was keen to provide a full picture of her successful political career. This gives robust evidence that he respects and takes seriously the political role of women in the history of the Ayyubid house. However, it is noticeable that Ibn Wāṣil mentions the *khātūn* in *Mufarrij* more often than Ibn al-'Adīm does in the latter's work. This indicates the strength of the belief of the former in the political ability of the *khātūn*.

Abū Shāma and Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī do not mention any information about Ḍayfa Khātūn. Both historians were from Syria. So they were in some way eyewitnesses, but their histories are more like dictionaries than histories, as mentioned before.[740] It is clear that Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī had a similar attitude to that of Abū Shāma, who was not happy

[736] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 268.

[737] Ibid, vol. 5, p. 268.

[738] El-Azhari, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 28.

[739] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*.

[740] See the section on contemporary historians in Chapter One.

about the political manner of the Ayyubid kings.[741] Comparing Ibn Wāṣil's portrayal of the *khātūn* with that of his near contemporary historians, the best of those is al-Maqrīzī. He gives the history of Aleppo reasonable attention, as he reports on the period since the reign of King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī. It is probable that Ibn Wāṣil, Ibn al-'Adīm, or both these historians were his sources for the history of Aleppo. Evidence for this can be found in the type of information about the *khātūn* and the style of writing about her.

Abū al-Fidā' (672-732/1273-1331) and Ibn al-Wardī (691-749/1292-1349) come in at the second level with respect to the above-mentioned historians in terms of their treatment of Ḍayfa Khātūn. Abū al-Fidā' paid as much attention to her life as he did to an Ayyubid King of Hama. Ibn al-Wardī's history is a supplement to that of Abū al-Fidā'.[742] That is, the two treated the history of Aleppo during this era in similar way. At a lower level is al-Nuwayrī's treatment of Ḍayfa Khātūn in his *Nihāyat al-Arab*. As for Ibn Taghrībirdī and Ibn Kathīr, not only do they just mention her name in one or two lines, but they also get her name wrong, and call her 'Ṣafya' Khātūn.[743]

Nonetheless, earlier sources report on her career to a greater extent than do later ones. Modern scholars tend to restrict the mention of Ḍayfa Khātūn to her efforts and influence on architectural matters, as will be shown later. It can be said that the political role of the Ayyubid princess has not received much attention from modern scholars, even compared to the roles of women in other dynasties such as that of the Mamluks.[744] Mainly, the focus of modern studies about the Ayyubid princesses has been on women's

[741] Regarding Abū Shāma's attitude, see Chapter Two, '*Mufarrij*, the meaning and the aim'.

[742] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, p. 3.

[743] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 6, p. 173; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 72. It is likely that the reason for the misspelling of her name was due to confusion of the Arabic letters ض /ḍ/ and ص /ṣ/.

[744] El-Azhari, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 28.

social roles and architectural contributions.[745] However, even in this domain there has been a lack of attention by modern scholars to the role of women in the medieval Islamic era, compared with their interest in the Ottoman Empire and European political systems, especially the Byzantine Empire and Spain.[746] Three relatively recent articles on Ḍayfa Khātūn and her achievements should be noted. Yasser Tabbaa's 'Ḍayfa Khātūn, regent queen and architectural patron' and 'Constructions of power and piety in medieval Aleppo' are dedicated to clarifying the role of the princess in the development of architecture in Ḍayfa Khātūn's era.[747] 'Ḍayfa Khātūn, Ayyubid queen of Aleppo 634-640 A.H/1236-1242 A.D.', by El-Azharī, focuses on the political role of Ḍayfa Khātūn.[748] The information about her career in El-Azharī's article is based mainly on Ibn Wāṣil's and Ibn al-'Adīm's reports.

A modern text about the life of the historian Ibn al-'Adīm, who was the *khātūn*'s ambassador during her reign, is Sāmī al-Dahhān's book *Ḥayāt Ibn al-'Adīm wa-āthāruh*. As its title suggests, the book is devoted to Ibn al-'Adīm's life and his political role in the state of Aleppo. Al-Dahhān briefly records Ibn al-'Adīm's role during the reign of Ḍayfa Khātūn's grandson, the king of Aleppo al-Nāṣir Yūsuf bin al-'Azīz.[749] On the other hand, al-Dahhān completely neglects to mention Ibn al-'Adīm's role during Ḍayfa Khātūn's regency. It is known that Ibn al-'Adīm won the trust of Ḍayfa Khātūn and played an influential role as her ambassador to several Ayyubid kings.[750]

[745] See Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn'. , p. 17.

[746] Ibid.

[747] Ibid.

[748] El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 28.

[749] al-Dahhān, *Ḥayāt Ibn al-'Adīm,* p. 23.

[750] See Morry, *An Ayyubid Notable*, p. 151.

Oddly, even feminist writers such as Mernissi do not pay Ḍayfa Khātūn any homage. In her book *The Forgotten Queens of Islam,* Mernissi lists the Muslim queens in Islamic history but does not mention Ḍayfa Khātūn anywhere in the book, despite the *khātūn* having been called 'queen' by her contemporary historians Ibn al-'Adīm and Ibn Wāṣil. Moreover, Charis Waddy, in her book *Women in Muslim Ḥistory*, states that she wrote her book for people who believe that the Muslim world was controlled by males alone.[751] She demonstrates that great numbers of Muslim women held various positions of importance in the Islamic world during the medieval era; her focus was on their political roles. Waddy read the history of the Ayyubids in *Mufarrij*.[752] She describes the role of Sitt al-Shām, sister of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and her role during the pilgrimage season, and presents the life of Shajar al-Durr.[753] Yet Waddy, too, does not mention Ḍayfa or Ghāziyya Khātūn, even though their political roles were more significant than that of Sitt al-Shām.

In fact, ignorance of the history of Ḍayfa Khātūn reveals a general lack of awareness of the role of women in politics in the Ayyubid era. For instance, modern scholars disagree in specifying the first Muslim queen. This reflects their insufficient knowledge of Muslim queens and their influence on Islamic history. Yasser Tabbaa states that Ḍayfa Khātūn was the first woman to govern an Islamic dynasty.[754] On the other hand, El-Azharī asserts that Ḍayfa Khātūn was the second queen in Islamic history, after Queen Arwā bint Aḥmad al-Ṣulayḥī. Indeed, there was another queen regnant before

[751] Charis Waddy, *Women in Muslim History* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 3.

[752] Waddy, *Women in Muslim History*, p. 88.

[753] Ibid, pp. 87-89.

[754] Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn'pp. 21-22.

Arwā in Yemen. She was Asmā' bint Shīhāb al-Ṣulayḥī. As indicated earlier, outside the Middle East there was another Muslim queen, Rāḍiyya, in Delhi. [755]

Ḍayfa Khātūn was not a queen, but a regent who ruled as a queen. The above-mentioned queens were honoured with the symbols of sovereignty in Islam, namely, coinage and the Friday sermons in their names.[756] They also held honorific titles.[757] Furthermore, the relationship between the regent and the Abbasid caliph was analogous to the relationship between the Ayyubid kings and the caliph in Baghdad; that is, the regent should seek authorization and recognition from the caliph.[758] For example, Ghāzīyya Khātūn sent her envoy to the caliph to ask for his acknowledgment.[759] Regardless of his attitude toward her, this behaviour from her means that regents in the Ayyubid age had to act as if they were kings. This difference of opinion in identifying the first Muslim queen indicates that history needs to be read in depth by specialists and feminists in order to unveil the exploits of Muslim women in all aspects of Islamic society, and not remain limited to observations of such women's efforts regarding charity or architecture.

Distinct from the women mentioned above, Ḍayfa Khātūn was the only female regent to have exercised direct control over the practical administration of the state, which she did over the course of some seven years. Despite these achievements, very little about her career has been recorded, and by only a handful of historians. Ḍayfa Khātūn employed new means of obtaining political power as a regent, and her methods seem to

[755] See Chapter Three, 'Shajar al-Durr and legitimacy in Ibn Wāṣil's text'.

[756] Coinage and the Friday sermon were symbols of the Caliphate, but they were also used by other monarchs. They played an important political role, as they represented the power of the government and were signs of removing or installing the Caliph and the ruler ('Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Ḥaḍāra al-islāmī fī al-'uṣūr al-wusṭā*, pp. 50-52).

[757] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt* p. 108.

[758] The nature of the relationship between the Ayyūbīds and the Caliph in Baghdad is described in Chapter Two.

[759] This point will be indicated later in this chapter.

have been acceptable to the authorities of the state. She became regent of her young grandson, King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Aleppo, who was seven years old when he inherited the throne in 634/1236.[760] Gaining this position was the most effective way for a woman to hold high political office, as she could use the young king to mask her practise of power, and she would not need to struggle against fierce opposition as Shajar al-Durr had done. The unique features of female regency might be the one reason Ibn Wāṣil paid such exhaustive attention to it in *Mufarrij*, despite the fact that he held no position in Aleppo himself.

Ḍayfa Khātūn before power according to Ibn Wāṣil

This section presents Ibn Wāṣil's record of the life of Ḍayfa Khātūn before attaining power. It will inspect the political factors that, in Ibn Wāṣil's view, prepared her to achieve a remarkable political reputation during the late Ayyubid era.

Childhood and early life

Ḍayfa Khātūn was born in Aleppo in 581/1189, the daughter of King al-'Ādil Abū Bakr I; her paternal uncle was Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn himself.[761] Her name means 'guest'.[762] There is a story about how she got her name; Ibn Wāṣil reported: 'It was said that King al-'Ādil had [been hosting] a guest when she was born. When he heard of it [her birth], he said to the person who had brought him this news, "Call her Ḍayfa".'[763]

Very little is known about Ḍayfa's childhood. She seems to have moved to Egypt with her father when he became the sultan there. She possibly projected a distinct personality, as she had a unique position in her father's affections compared to her three

[760] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 119; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 344,

[761] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Ārab*, vol. 29, p. 55; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 72.

[762] El-Azhari, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 30.

[763] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5 p. 312.

sisters.[764] Ibn Wāṣil comments on her position in his account of how the king of Aleppo, al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī bin Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, had sent a letter to his uncle al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr I in 608/1211 seeking to become engaged to her:

> The content of the letter was full of propitiation and words of appeasement in the hope of extending the official reign over his territory. He also asked for the hand of his [al-ʻĀdil's] daughter, Ḍayfa Khātūn, the sister of King al-Kāmil. Ḍayfa Khātūn was the most beloved daughter to her father, King al-ʻĀdil. She had previously been proposed to by other kings, but he refused to marry her to any of them. King al-Ẓāhir had previously proposed to Ḍayfa Khātūn through his uncle after the death of his wife Ghāziyya, who was her sister. However, his request had not been accepted. [765]

She was also apparently very dear to her husband's heart, according to Ibn al-ʻAdīm: 'She occupied a high position with him; such status had never been heard of before'.[766] This comment by Ibn al-ʻAdīm stresses that Ḍayfa Khātūn seemed skilled and had a character that endeared her to those men who were the most important, not only to her personally, but to the Ayyubid state, which distinguished her from other women of her social status. Describing the engagement process, Ibn Wāṣil comments:

> King al-Ẓāhir sent Judge Bahā' al-Dīn bin Shaddād as an envoy to his uncle King al-ʻĀdil. The judge was authorized to finalise arrangements for the marriage of King al-Ẓāhir to Ḍayfa Khātūn. Also, the judge carried with him many clothes and garments for notables of the country and a large amount of money for the marriage expenses.[767]

Ibn Wāṣil shows that King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī was aware of the political importance of marrying her, which is why he proposed to her again, and why he made elaborate arrangements for the wedding once his proposal had been accepted. Some early historians

[764] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Ārab*, vol. 29, p. 55.

[765] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 212.

[766] Ibn al-ʻAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 633.

[767] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 213.

such as al-Maqrīzī and Ibn al-ʻAdīm stress that the king was generous with the dowry and monetary gifts.[768] Ibn Wāṣil seems to think that al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī wanted to give a firm impression to the bride's father that he was keen to marry her and would treat her with great respect. Ibn al-ʻAdīm and al-Maqrīzī give this royal wedding high attention.[769] However, Ibn Wāṣil provides more information than their writings do. *Mufarrij* explains in detail the extent to which al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī warmly welcomed Ḍayfa, as befitting her status, when she arrived in Aleppo:

> Also in this month, Ḍayfa Khātūn moved to Aleppo in a great convoy. King al-Ẓāhir and all of the Aleppo notables and scholars shared in celebrating her arrival in the city. The day on which she entered the citadel of Aleppo was particularly significant. In this regard, she brought with her huge amounts of garments, jewellery and other items borne by about fifty horses and three hundred camels. Apart from that, the convoy consisted of about a hundred camels bearing servants, bridesmaids, and slaves. It was reported that there were a hundred bridesmaids serving her: many of them were singers and jesters, and another hundred-odd bridesmaids who were expert in making glorious handicrafts and domestic objects for her.[770]

Regarding the meeting between the king and his bride, Ibn Wāṣil adds:

> It was also mentioned that when Ḍayfa Khātūn entered the palace, King al-Ẓāhir met her with very great respect. He gave her five sets of expensive jewels, several unique gold necklaces, about a hundred and seventy pieces of gold and silver, and twenty chests of luxurious clothes. In addition, the king dedicated twenty bridesmaids and ten servants to be at her service.[771]

The generosity of the king went beyond the *khātūn* to reach Shams al-Dīn bin al-Tanbī, who was sent with her by her father as a deputy.[772] Ibn al-ʻAdīm adds, 'He gave Ibn al-Tanbī one of the Aleppo villages that is part of al-Artīq (in Aleppo). It is called

[768] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 295; Ibn al-ʻAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 633.

[769] See Ibn al-ʻAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 633.; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 295.

[770] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, pp. 213-214.

[771] Ibid.

[772] Ibid, p. 213.

Tala‘. He also gave him numerous grants.’[773] This marriage can be considered the most legendary of the whole Ayyubid dynasty. Therefore, several early historians who are mentioned in this research report this marriage.[774] It is noteworthy that Ibn Wāṣil makes mention of many political marriages in his book, yet he does not pay as close attention to reporting the finer details in any of the others, not even in the case of the marriage of Ḍayfa’s sister Ghāzīyya Khātūn to King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī himself.[775] Ibn Wāṣil's aim of doing this may have been to convey the importance and unique character of Ḍayfa Khātūn. In addition, this marriage had important consequences: it allowed al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī to keep Aleppo for himself and his descendants. It led to peace for Aleppo even after al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī’s death.[776] It is worth mentioning that before this marriage there was turbulence in the relationship between King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī and Sultan al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr I.[777] Thus, this marriage served as a guarantee between them of the purity of each other’s intentions.[778]

Ḍayfa Khātūn and her husband

Ibn Wāṣil and other chroniclers are silent about the life and political role of Ḍayfa Khātūn during the reign of her husband, King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī. It is possible that his strong personality did not allow her to play a significant role. This can be inferred from Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation of the king's policies. He considers the king to have been the best of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's sons.

[773] Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 633.

[774] Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 177; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘Arab*, vol. 29, pp.11 & 15; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 52.

[775] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 212..

[776] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 52.

[777] Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, p. 28.

[778] Al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr was the atabeg of King al-Manṣūr bin al-‘Azīz ‘Uthmān bin Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (589-596/1193-1200). He removed the young king and became the Sultan of Egypt in 596/1200. This made Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s sons and some statesmen doubt his intentions. For more information about the dispute, see: al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-‘Arab*, vol. 29, pp. 11 & 15; al- Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, pp. 264-267.

> He was firm, fair, of good policy, beloved by his citizens, chivalrous, and cautious. He reunited the members of the Ṣalāḥī house when his uncle seized the counties. He treated them nicely. Without him, the family would have dispersed.[779]

Looking at Ḍayfa Khātūn's successful political career during her regency and her close relationship with her husband, it can be said that Ibn Wāṣil does not rule out that she must have played a critical role. Evidence for this can be found in two life events in particular which occurred during their marriage. The first was in her husband's display of feelings toward their son al-'Azīz Muḥammad (612-633/ 1216–1236). At his birth in 610/1213, 'Aleppo was beautifully decorated to celebrate the birth of the boy, and King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī held a huge festival on this occasion'.[780] Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī also remark on this evident favouritism, noting that al- 'Azīz was selected as crown prince, even though he had older brothers. This preference may have been because of al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī's affection and high regard for the boy's mother.[781]

The second life event was the illness and death of King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī in 613/1216. During her husband's infirmity and after his demise Ḍayfa Khātūn acted independently. According to *Mufarrij*:

> On the eighteenth of Jumādā al-Thānī, no one was allowed to visit him due to his critically poor health. His wife, Ḍayfa Khātūn, daughter of King al-'Ādil, and the atabeg Shihāb al-Din Ṭughril looked after him and handled his responsibilities. On Tuesday night, the twentieth of Jumāda al-Thānī, he passed away. Ḍayfa Khātūn and the atabeg Shihāb al-Din Tughril kept the news of his death secret. However, they performed his last rites and buried him in a grave in the room of the gold. After that he was transferred to his school that had been built for him.

Ibn Wāṣil emphasizes that transferring the throne to the son was done efficiently:

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[779] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 243.

[780] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 220.

[781] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 52; Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb duwal al-Islām* ed by. Maḥmūd Arnā'ūṭ Ḥasan Ismā'īl Murūwa, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1999), vol 2, p. 145.

> Toward the end of the day of the death of King al-Ẓāhir, the atabeg Shihāb al-Din Ṭughril informed a few people of this news. He ordered them to be in attendance at the citadel in the early morning on the following day, the twenty-first of Jumādā al-Thānī. Actually, many people came to the citadel [that day] as part of their daily routine, but without knowing what was happening. Soon after that, the gates of the citadel were opened to show the kings, al-'Azīz and his brother al-Ṣāliḥ, dressed in black and full of grief.[782]

It is supposed that Ibn Wāṣil expected that Ḍayfa Khātūn's powerful personality and the political experience that she had gained as her husband's consort allowed her to act with confidence in this difficult time. It is obvious that his high respect and personal regard for King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī made Ibn Wāṣil focus more on the king's political manner than on that of his wife.

Ḍayfa Khātūn and her son

Although atabeg Shihāb al-Din was responsible for meeting visitors and delegations, it is apparent that Ḍayfa Khātūn shared this responsibility with him. Ibn Wāṣil in his commentary seems to imply that Ḍayfa Khātūn's role during this event showed a capacity for clear thinking and efficient action in emergency situations. In his mind this ability was consistently evident over the course of her regency period. It might be he adapted this opinion since Ḍayfa Khātūn might have undertaken this role because she wanted to transfer the throne to her son smoothly, according to her husband's last will. Her son might have been threatened by his older brothers into forgoing his claim to the throne.[783] Ḍayfa Khātūn and the atabeg managed to execute the will successfully, as they kept her son's throne under the supervision of Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril even though there was an attempt to install an uncle, al-Afḍal 'Alī, to be King of Aleppo.[784]

[782] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, pp. 241-242.

[783] El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 31.

[784] Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, p. 29.

Ibn Wāṣil becomes silent again on Ḍayfa Khātūn's position after this incident, probably because Aleppo enjoyed a period of stability after King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī's death. Ibn al-ʻAdīm and Ibn Wāṣil agree that this stability was the result of arrangements the king had made during his sickness to ensure that no problems could occur once he had passed away.[785] The atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril had already been chosen by the king to take charge of the state:

> The atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril was brought and was given the keys to the treasuries. The king gave him sovereignty over all the castles and all the state's affairs; he gave him a letter in his handwriting [in which al-Ẓāhir] transferred to him all his authority.[786]

Other contemporary and near contemporary historians such as Abū Shāma and Ibn Taghrībirdī report the story of transferring the throne to King al- ʻAzīz, but do not mention anything about Ḍayfa Khātūn's role.[787] Modern scholars such as El-Azharī believe that she had no role in this step of the history of Aleppo. He considers some factors which may have discouraged her from taking any steps toward assuming authority. At that time, she was aged thirty-two and had not had much political experience. She was not yet ready to hold power, as she had spent only four years in Aleppo by the time of her husband's death. Thus, she had not had much time to form strong relationships that could be depended on in establishing power. Moreover, she may have completely trusted Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril, to take responsibility for governing the state at that time.[788]

However, it is not unlikely that she had a significant role in appointing the atabeg for her son. Al-Nuwayrī mentions that Ḍayfa was responsible for managing the state's

[785] Ibn al-ʻAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 635.; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 239.

[786] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 239.

[787] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatyn*. 253; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 297.

[788] El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', pp. 33-34.

affairs and she appointed Shihāb al-Dīn as atabeg for her son.[789] He repeats the same meaning in another place; he asserts that she saved the throne of her son and grandson.[790] It is known that al-Nuwayrī's position allowed him to see certain documents and archives that could tell him facts that were not available to other historians. It is probable that he found records that solidified his attitude toward the *khātūn*. Ibn Wāṣil was not sure who had brought and given the atabeg the keys to the treasury. That is why he uses the passive voice in his account of this incident. It might be that he understood that the king was ill, and it was important for him to have a deputy. The person whom he trusted most to carry out his will was his wife, the mother of al-ʻAzīz. It is not unlikely that she was with the king when he appointed the atabeg; it might be also the case that she was the king's adviser, and in fact the king might have wanted the atabeg under her watch so she would be as close as possible to the political centre of action. Due to the fact that Ibn Wāṣil had no solid evidence about the significance of her impact on the king's decision, he presents this point by using the passive voice and anonymous pronouns, as mentioned above.

Ḍayfa Khātūn and her grandson

Ibn Wāṣil mentions Ḍayfa Khātūn's prominent role again when King al-ʻAzīz Muḥammad died in 634/1236.[791] According to King al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī's will, the other son, al-Ṣāliḥ, was to become the new ruler of Aleppo after the death of his brother al-ʻAzīz Muḥammad.[792] But Ḍayfa was keen to install her grandson al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II as king. This was in accordance with her son's wishes, as King al-ʻAzīz Muḥammad had wanted his son, and not his brother, to succeed him.[793] Al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II was al-ʻAzīz

[789] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ʻĀrab*, vol. 29, p. 75.

[790] Ibid, p. 301.

[791] El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 31.

[792] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 3, p. 238.

[793] Ibn al-ʻAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 676.

Muḥammad's only surviving child.[794] Most of the early sources consulted in this research do not indicate whether any actions were directly taken by Ḍayfa Khātūn to gain power, to influence the decision-makers of the state in the process of appointing her grandson, or in choosing the regent council members. Despite the importance of this movement in the regime system in the Ayyubid history, the contemporary historian Ibn al-Jawzī did not mention any role by the regent or the council regency. He says only 'the Aleppan people installed his son after his death'.[795] Abū al-Fidā'and Ibn al-Wardī each report it in a short sentence.[796] Yet Ibn Wāṣil gives more details:

> Prince Shams al-Dīn Lu'lu' al-Amīnī and Prince 'Izz al-Dīn 'Umar bin Maḥalla looked after and managed his kingdom. At the same time, the state minister and judge Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qifṭī and the *khātūn*'s personal minister Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl were advisors to them. However, when the whole group reached a decision, the minister Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl would go inside to inform Her Excellency Ḍayfa Khātūn, daughter of King al-'Ādil, about the decision in order to authorize it. In this respect, all official letters were addressed to her and her signatures were on many official documents. All matters were under her supervision and control.[797]

The question that should be asked here is why in this particular regency was there a regency council? This was unusual compared to former regency situations. To answer this question it is necessary to come back to the regency in Islamic law. There is an alternative method for selecting a *waṣī*: one can be appointed by a judge.[798] The situation as governed by political convention is not much different than the religiously mandated one: there are various methods of selecting, electing, and installing the regency council.[799] Consequently, the regent was either one person, or consisted of more than one. A regent

[794] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar,* vol. 3, p. 158.

[795] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān,* vol. 22, p. 344.

[796] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* , vol. 3, p. 158; Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 160.

[797] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 119.

[798] *al-Mawsū'a al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 43, pp. 168 & 473.

[799] al-Zāmlī, 'al-Wiṣā'īya 'alā al-'arsh', 471.

might also be elected by the authorities of the state.[800] The council of regency appears to have been a rare type which may have been linked to female regents; it may have reflected common misgivings regarding the ability of women to command authority, or perhaps the regency council could help the female regent in dealing with certain issues that were in the male domain according to the Islamic law, as will be explained later. It is probable that the only two cases of regency council in the Ayyubid era were in the cases of the Ayyubid princesses, Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn.

With regard to the position of regent being held by a woman, in Islamic law, a divorced or widowed woman can be a regent for her own children.[801] Muslims in medieval history, especially the Ayyubids, accepted women's involvement in the political arena. The fact that they allowed women to be regents, and respectfully gave them their support, is a clear indication of this, as will be discussed later. This situation might have come about because the Ayyubids followed the Shāfiʻī school, as Ibn Wāṣil reports, and Shāfiʻī jurists believe that a woman can be the regent for her children if she is capable.[802,]

According to *Mufarrij*, Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl's job was as the secretary and deputy of the regency council. The decision of the council was rejected or confirmed by Ḍayfa Khātūn as regent queen. At the same time, Jamāl al-Dawla was also her official spokesman at the regency council and in public.[803] In the passage quoted above, Ibn Wāṣil may have wanted to express his opinion about the presence of Ḍayfa Khātūn in the political domain. He did not condemn her for this. Instead, he seems to convey the idea that she did not use her position as queen to greedily pursue power. She assumed this

[800] al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭānya*, p. 6; Mūnshīḥ, 'al-Mumkin wa al-mustabʿad'.

[801] *al-Mawsūʿa al-fiqhiyya al-kuwaytiyya*, vol. 43, p. 173.

[802] Ibid.

[803] Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 21.

position of regent because it was necessary. This is in the same vein as her actions leading up to and following her husband's death. Throughout, her main aim appears to have been to support her son and then her grandson. Al-Maqrīzī's interpretation of how the council managed the state's affairs is consistent with Ibn Wāṣil's. According to him, Prince Shams al-Dīn Lu'lu' al-Amīnī, Prince 'Izz al-Dīn 'Umar bin Maḥalla the state minister, and the judge Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qifṭī would speak with Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl, who would then convey the information to the *khātūn*.[804]

From the foregoing, Ibn Wāṣil's illustration of the early life of this khātūn appears to have been intended by him to show the reader which factors affected her political performance, and in particular, which factors had made her successful at it. It is possible that in his reckoning the first factor was her father, King al-'Ādil Abū Bakr I, who was described a 'shrewd sultan' as indicated before. He managed by his manoeuvres to become Sultan of Egypt and to transfer power to himself and his children, as mentioned before.[805] The second factor was her husband, who was considered the best of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's sons. With his wise policies, he was able to save his state and maintain its power until the end of the dynasty, as discussed earlier. The third factor was the atabeg Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril. During his regency period, Ḍayfa may have been very close to him, in which case she would have been kept fully informed on the development of political events. This period of her life could be considered by Ibn Wāṣil to be a training course to prepare her for assuming a significant role later on. It can be understood from his depiction that he does not believe Ḍayfa Khātūn to have been isolated in the *ḥarīm* of her husband's palace; she did not appear to have spent much time in competition with other women—whether free or enslaved—as usually happened in the palaces of that era; rather,

[804] al-Maqrīzī, vol. 1, p. 377.

[805] See Chapter Two, 'Historical background'.

she was very close to the political scene as a result of her early life.[806] These factors may answer the question in his mind of why she was extremely successful compared to other Ayyubid men who were her contemporaries.

It is worth emphasising that Ibn Wāṣil gives far greater attention to Ḍayfa Khātūn in her early life than to any other Ayyubid khātūn. Ibn Wāṣil shows that Ḍayfa Khātūn had been exposed to enough experience in politics in various phases in her early life that when she came to power she was ready to lead the state as successfully as any of the politicians with whom she collaborated, according to his text.

Resistance and conflict over power according to Ibn Wāṣil

It is commonplace for women to have to strive to hold their position in the political domain, although they may be more skilled than some of the governing men. It is noticeable that this situation is not limited to any specific society or culture but represents a common bias against women in the field of politics in those societies. For instance, queens apparently had more legitimate authority in medieval Iberia than they had elsewhere in Europe.[807] But even they faced severe limitations. When King Enrique (Henry I of Castile, 611-614/1214-1217) died, his sister Queen Berenguela (Berengaria of Castile, 614-644/1217-1246) was supposed to inherit the throne, although she was only able to claim it via her son Fernando (Ferdinand III).[808] Her noblemen brought him to her in secret and then displayed military strength against other noblemen who were not keen to accept her as ruler. After negotiations, it was recognized that she was entitled by law to

[806] Waddy, *Women in Muslim History*, p. 124; Yūsuf Ghīwa, 'Aḥrā'r al-balāṭ al-'Abbās fī kitābāt al-Jāḥiẓ: al-sayyida Zubayda Umm Ja'far namūdhajan', *Majallat al-'ulūm al-insānīya*, vol. 11, pp. 159-210 (Constantine, Algeria: Publications and Scientific Animation Directorate, University of Mentouri, 1999), pp. 198-199.

[807] Miriam Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and Political Women in the High Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 5.

[808] Janna Bianchini, *The Queen's Hand: Power and Authority in the Reign of Berenguela of Castile*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 5; Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile*, p. 98.

rule, but the people asked her to let her son rule, because a woman was supposedly unfit to lead the nation militarily.[809]

The restrictions and opposition faced by Muslim women in the medieval period were even more pronounced than what their Christian counterparts experienced. As happened to Shajar al-Durr and other politically active Muslim women, Ḍayfa Khātūn had to suffer to achieve her goals. Mernissi notes that this was the situation for any Muslim woman in a position of political authority: 'She only held power with the consent of, and through, a man. Her political actions could only appear on the public stage masked by the presence of men.'[810] Although men often resisted any attempts by women to seek political power, it seems that the position of female regent was more acceptable to them than was the role of female monarch. This may have been because of the simultaneous presence of a male ruler or due to the assumption that this position was limited in duration (until the child monarch reached the age of maturity); it could also have been because she is seen to be playing a sort of mothering role towards a male child: an arrangement seemingly acceptable to men.

It would appear that there are two kinds of ruler who are particularly vulnerable to attack by others who seek power. Those two types are models of weak authority in the minds of certain aspirants to the throne. The first is a young king. There are many examples of this in different eras and states. As indicated before, King al-'Azīz Muḥammad was exposed to a plot by his enemy competitors to overthrow the throne. Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril, as a faithful regent, was able to foil this plot.[811] The second kind is

[809] Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile*, pp. 98-99.

[810] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt*, p. 78.

[811] Ibn al 'Adīm reports: 'After the death of the sultan there was much turbulence, as the decision-makers in Aleppo were divided into two groups. The first group's opinion was to make King al-Afḍal, the uncle of al-'Azīz, his atabeg. They said, "This is a large monarchy, it cannot be kept without him". The second team,

a female ruler. The clearest example for this other than Shajar al-Durr is Ḍayfa Khātūn, when she became regent for her grandson. Thus, the sovereignty of Aleppo was doubly vulnerable to attack, as Aleppo had a child king and a woman regent. It might be that in the minds of other Ayyubid rulers, Aleppo was a weakened state during that period. Men's traditional assumptions of women being unqualified for the job encouraged them to react against the development of events in Aleppo. In the following lines these threats are considered in analyzing Ibn Wāṣil's view of Ḍayfa Kātūn's efforts in dealing with these drawbacks and why he finds her to have been the right person in the right place.

Sultan al-Kāmil's reaction based on *Mufarrij*

The first and most important reaction was by her brother, Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad. His acknowledgment was the most crucial to her, for the sultan in this dynasty was in charge of giving the kings their authority, as indicated formerly.[812] Thus, the first step for Ḍayfa Khātūn was to gain his approval of the appointment of King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II as ruler of Aleppo.[813] Ibn Wāṣil comments on this:

> When these principles were adopted, as mentioned earlier, the judge Zaīn al-Dīn bin al-Ustaḍh—God have mercy on him—and Badr al-Dīn bin Abī al-Hayjā' went as envoys to King al-Kāmil. They took with them the *kazāghand* [mail-lined jerkin or corselet], clothes, the helmet, and other personal belongings of King al-'Azīz, may Almighty God rest his soul in peace. Upon their arrival in Egypt, they presented the message and what they carried with them to King al-Kāmil. The latter was sad about the passing of King al-'Azīz. King al-Kāmil was not generous with his gifts and grants to the envoys. He [al-Kāmil] swore to King al-Nāṣir according to what was proposed [as the regency council had requested]. He addressed the two envoys and indicated that he preferred King al-Ṣāliḥ, son of King al-Ẓāhir,

led by the judge Bahā 'al-Dīn, were of the view that if al-Afḍal became atabeg, he might take the throne for himself. But King al-'Azīz was the grandson of the sultan al-'Adil, and therefore the kingdom would be safe. Finally, they agreed that the oath should be sworn [first] by King al-'Azīz as to his loyalty and obedience, then his brother, King al-Ṣāliḥ, and then the loyal Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril. Everyone took the oaths either happily or grudgingly.' (*Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 614).

[812] See Chapter Two, 'Ayyubid titles and honorifics'.

[813] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 377.

> ruler of ‘Ayn Tāb [Gaziantep], to the military officers. He also thought that King al-Ṣāliḥ was eligible to bring up and look after his nephew, King al-Nāṣir. Yet when the two envoys went back to Aleppo and informed Ḍayfa Khātūn about this, she did not agree with it, and the ruling group of the kingdom also found it to be unacceptable.[814]

This attitude from the sultan was totally different from his attitude toward her son al-‘Azīz Muḥammad when he became king while he was still a boy.[815] According to *Mufarrij*:

> In this year, King al-Ashraf left Egypt heading to his country. He took with him *khila‘* [sg. *khil'a*] and the *Taklīd al-Sulṭana* [appointment to the sultanate] from Sultan al-Kāmīl to King al-‘Azīz Ghayath al-Dīn Muḥammad, son of King al-Ẓāhir, to rule the state of Aleppo and its *sanājik* [sg. *sanjak* that is administrative territories].[816]

The difference between the sultan’s attitude to al-‘Azīz Muḥammad and his attitude to al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II might be because of the gender of their respective regents: the first was Shihāb al-Dīn Ṭughril, the second was Ḍayfa Khātūn. The stereotypical image of women having limited abilities may have considerably influenced the sultan’s attitude. The evidence of this, in Ibn Wāṣil's view, was that al-Kāmil Muḥammad did not wait for Ḍayfa Khātūn's response, but he took direct action to change the situation in Aleppo:

> After a while, King al-Kāmil sent *khil'a* to King al-Nāṣir without *markūb* [livestock] and sent other robes to the kingdom’s princes. Likewise, he sent with another messenger with a robe to King al-Ṣāliḥ, son of King al-Ẓāhir, the ruler of Gaziantep. Ḍayfa Khātūn and the ruling group did not like the policy of King al-Kāmil and became very worried about it. Ultimately, the group agreed with King al-Nāṣir to assume power, but without accepting *khil'a* for other princes. Moreover, they refused to meet the messenger who was carrying the robe to King al-Ṣāliḥ. Also, they did not allow the two men

[814] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 120.

[815] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 335.

[816] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-Kurūb*, vol. 4, p. 129. The word used in this passage is *sanājik* (sg. *sanjak*), meaning the administrative territories under the yellow banner of the Sultan of Egypt. See Hirschler, ‘He is a child and this land is a borderland of Islam’, p. 33.

to meet. These incidents increased their concerns about King al-Kāmil's policy.[817]

It seems that with regard to Ḍayfa Khātūn's regency Ibn Wāṣil disagrees with Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad, despite his high respect for the Sultan.[818] Ibn Wāṣil justifies the actions Ḍayfa took regarding her brother. From his account, he gives the impression that he is dealing with Ḍayfa Khātūn's history just as he would treat any of the Ayyubid kings.

Ibn Wāṣil supports Ḍayfa Khātūn when she found herself compelled to face the sultan's military in 634/1237. She started to fight against King al-Kāmil Muḥammad by cooperating with her other brother, King al-Ashraf Mūsā. At the same time, al-Ashraf had concerns in his heart over his brother, al-Kāmil.[819] Ibn Wāṣil and Ibn al-'Adīm list the reasons for this anxiety.[820] Such concern spread to other Ayyubid kings in Syria, as King al-Kāmil Muḥammad's behaviour caused them to forge an alliance against him.[821] Its members consisted of Ḍayfa Khātūn, King al-Ashraf Mūsā, and King al-Mujāhid Shīrkūḥ (583–637/1186–1240), the ruler of Homs. They tried to persuade King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd (626-641/1229-1244) the ruler of Hama, to join their side.[822] Although he

[817] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 121.

[818] Ibn Wāṣil strongly defended King al-Kāmil Muḥammad for allowing the German king to have Jerusalem during the Fifth Crusade, although the sultan was criticized by most of the Muslims. He also considers the sultan to have been shrewd, comparing him to Mu'awiya bin Abī Sufyān. *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, P. 155.

[819] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 297; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, pp. 240-241; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Ārab*, vol. 29, p. 141; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 159.

[820] King al-Kāmil gave his brother Damascus and took a substantial amount of al-Ashraf's territory. When al-Kāmil went to visit his eastern lands each year, he would stay for a while in Damascus, availing himself of al-Ashraf's hospitality, a great expense for the latter. When the Sultan of Rum attacked al-Ashraf's lands, King al-Kāmil did not support his brother against the Sultan of Rum. When al-Ashraf and al-Kāmil attacked Amid together, al-Kāmil did not give his brother any of the territory they had taken; on the contrary, he took al-Ashraf's lands in Harran, Raqqa. Edessa, Saruj, and Ra's al-'Ayn (Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 678; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 122-123; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 160; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 369).

[821] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 156.

[822] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 159; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 377.

agreed with them, he truly wanted to be on his uncle al-Kāmil Muḥammad's side.[823] Ḍayfa Khātūn did not stop there: she also sent Ibn al-'Adīm as an envoy to the Seljuk Sultan of Rum to ask for his support to strengthen the alliance, and she managed to obtain it. The alliance members also asked the king of Kerak, al-Nāṣir Dāwūd, to join them, but he preferred to be allied with King al-Kāmil.[824] Finally, they sent an envoy to al-Kāmil Muḥammad to inform him of their demands. Ibn al-Jawzī reports it thus:

> 'We have all agreed, and demand that you not leave Egypt to enter Syria again and [that you] swear it to us.' Al-Kāmil replied, 'You agreed: what do you want from me? I want you also to swear to me not to attack any part of my territories or anything under my control, and I will meet your request.'[825]

Ibn al-Jawzī, who was Ibn Wāṣil's contemporary, does not mention any clear involvement on the part of Ḍayfa Khātūn in this event; he indicates only that King al-Ashraf sent to Aleppo to obtain their support.[826] Even the later historians, such as al-Maqrīzī and Abū al-Fidā, report the events in the same way as Ibn al-Jawzī .[827] This means that Ibn Wāṣil is the only historian who acknowledges (and appreciates) Ḍayfa Khātūn's political role, despite the fact that, unlike Ibn al-'Adīm, Ibn Wāṣil was not a member of her court. In Ibn Wāṣil's assessment, she showed various aspects of her political personality in dealing with state matters. She began her grandson's reign with very successful steps to consolidate his control of the throne. These steps gave her political weight with the other Ayyubid rulers.

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[823] Al-Muẓaffar's reason for not joining the alliance was because al-Kāmil had made him the king of Hama, had given him his daughter's hand, and had given the town of Ba'rīn to al-Muẓaffar as well. Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 127; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 143; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* , vol. 1, p. 379.

[824] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p.355; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 160.

[825] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 127.

[826] al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 341.

[827] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 377; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 160.

Ibn Wāṣil sees that the death of Aleppo's strong ally King al-Ashraf Mūsā did not change Ḍayfa Khātūn's political conduct toward her brother, Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad. She gave her oath to the new ruler of Damascus, their brother King al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʻīl.[828] The rest of the Ayyubid kings followed her suit and did the same, except King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd, who took the decision mentioned earlier. Their aim was to unite their efforts against the ambitions of their brother al-Kāmil Muḥammad. The death of al-Ashraf Mūsā, conversely, encouraged al-Kāmil Muḥammad to attack Damascus.[829] The allies sent their forces in aid. During the conflict, al-Kāmil Muḥammad did not harm the Homs or the Aleppo forces. He moved towards Homs but died as he was about to capture it.[830] Neither Ibn Wāṣil nor Ibn al-ʻAdīm provide any explanation for Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad's behaviour toward the Aleppo military. El-Azharī accounts for it by asserting that the sultan wanted to keep their relationship from deteriorating.[831] Ibn Wāṣil, on the other hand, in describing this incident may have wished to show that Aleppo was more powerful than the other Ayyubid forces. He continues:

> When King al-Kāmil controlled Damascus, the elites in Aleppo were worried. They felt an intense fear, and they predicted that he must attack them.[832]

The historian appears to defend Ḍayfa Khātūn for the steps that she took to face the threat from her brother.

> Ḍayfa Khātūn then summoned King al-Muʻazzam, son of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the rest of his brothers and relatives, and the princes of various ranks. They all swore an oath to King al-Nāṣir, son of King al-ʻAzīz, and to his grandmother; then, they also asked the notables, elites, and commoners to

[828] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 160; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 379.

[829] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya,* vol. 27, p. 235; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar,* vol. 7, pp. 324-325.

[830] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 160.

[831] El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 37.

[832] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 179.

> swear an oath. She prepared for a siege, gathering military supplies, food, wood, and other necessary provisions. She ordered that stones be fetched and prepared for the catapults. Moreover, she employed the Khwārizmians and other groups. At the moment Kanghir the Turkmen arrived she put him to use and preferred him to other Turkmens. Apart from this, she inducted some fighters who had deserted from the army of King al-Kāmil. In addition, she wrote to the Sultan of Rum Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw, to ask for help. He responded by providing her with some of his highly trained soldiers, and he offered to send more of them in case she wanted, but she found them sufficient.[833]

In this passage, Ibn Wāṣil depicts Ḍayfa Khātūn as a politician capable of saving her suzerainty. She not only worked at securing Aleppo, but at contracting foreign alliances to help her in the war against her brother. She may also have wanted to prevent any danger posed by external parties. For example, according to Ibn al-ʻAdīm, in 634/1237 Kanghir the Turkmen had attacked Aleppo's villages and looted them.[834] Ibn Wāṣil apparently finds this a sign of her cleverness and foresight, as she changed this hostile relationship to friendship by honouring him with a high position. She was also able to persuade defectors from King al-Kāmil Muḥammad's troops to join her army. Finally, she asked for aid from her honest ally, the Sultan of Rum Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw II (634–643/1237–1246).[835] El-Azharī explains that it was an unusual event for an Ayyubid woman to receive oaths of allegiance, not only from the leaders of the army and the elites of the state, but from other members of the royal family who did not object to her.[836] This rare case is a sign of the level of her power. This is what Ibn Wāṣil may have wanted to emphasize in reporting this story.

Due to the death of Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad, the military clash between them did not, in fact, occur. Her reaction is reported in *Mufarrij* as follows:

[833] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 180.

[834] Ibn al-ʻAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 670.

[835] Eddé-Terrasse, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep*, p. 110.

[836] El-Azhari, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 37.

> As the news of his death reached Aleppo, a memorial ceremony was offered on this occasion. King al-Nāṣir, who was eight years old at the time, attended the ceremony to offer solace and express grief.[837]

Ibn Wāṣil consistently describes Ḍayfa Khātūn's reactions to any new events. Her political skills were evident on this occasion as she followed protocol in arranging the ceremony in order to express her sadness at her brother's death, which is what appears to have inspired Ibn Wāṣil.

The elite's reaction

In addition to the reaction of her brother and how she dealt with that, Ibn Wāṣil describes another reaction against the regency of Ḍayfa Khātūn. This was in the same year, but from the ruler of Shayzar, Shihāb al-Dīn Yūsuf, in agreement with Kamāl al-Dīn al-'Ajamī, one of Aleppo's statesmen.[838] They sent a message to King al-Ashraf Mūsā before his death to encourage him to take Aleppo, promising to give him their support. Their attempt failed, as the king refused to listen to them. "Al-Ashraf rejected it and clarified that he would not harm or do anything bad to any of the family members of King al-Ẓāhir."[839] Ibn Wāṣil adds:

> This news reached Ḍayfa Khātūn, daughter of King al-'Adil, and the group in Aleppo. They accordingly stopped the messenger and brought him back to Aleppo. Moreover, the messenger was arrested and questioned about his mission. His beard was shaved before he was moved to Darbsak [Trapesac] for imprisonment. Also, Kamāl al-Dīn al-'Ajamī and Shihāb al-Dīn, ruler of Shayzar, were arrested in the citadel. All Shihāb al-Dīn's assets and money, worth forty cartloads of gold and silver, were confiscated. However, the assets of Kamāl al-Dīn al-'Ajamī were not seized, in order to placate his family and relatives. Both Kamāl al-Dīn al-'Ajamī and Shihāb al-Dīn remained in prison until the death of King al-Kāmīl. They were released thereafter.[840]

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[837] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 181.

[838] Eddé-Terrasse, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep*, p. 111.

[839] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 129.

[840] Ibid, pp. 129-130.

It appears that in Ibn Wāṣil's account, Ḍayfa Khātūn did not show any weakness. Deciding that the response of al-Ashraf Mūsā was not enough to dispel the danger, she neutralised the plot by removing the plotters. It was not only the regency council group who agreed with Ḍayfa Khātūn's response to the conspirators, but also, it appears, Ibn Wāṣil himself. He proved by his account that she would take decisive action against anyone suspected of attempting to remove her from power.

Ibn Wāṣil shows another kind of threat to the throne and he describes another wise way in dealing with it. A further development in the same year against Ḍayfa Khātūn was the appearance of the Turkmen prince, Kanghir, mentioned earlier. Ibn Wāṣil states:

> After the death of King al-'Azīz, this prince gathered a large number of Turkmen fighters. He attacked and wrecked various parts of the country, causing great havoc, including in the suburbs of Aleppo from the Qūrs side. On the other side, Kanghir and his fighters penetrated some of the Rum territories. Although the army of Aleppo gave chase and fought back against them, the army was defeated and looted by this enemy. This made the Aleppo rulers suspect that the sultan of Rum was behind the attacks by Kanghir, so they sent an envoy to the sultan. The latter denounced the actions of Kanghir and ordered him to return all that he and his fighters had looted from Aleppo. He [Kanghir] returned only some of the stolen goods, but he stopped the attacks.[841]

In the foregoing account, *Mufarrij* indicates a new aspect of Ḍayfa Khātūn's character: namely, her method of resolving difficulties through diplomacy—and doing so with one of the most powerful states of that era, an entity which could lend her significant support. This relationship was reinforced and enhanced, as will be shown later. The threats did not stop at this point, however. The Crusaders put Aleppo under their

[841] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 130.

observation. They played a role in attacking it. This point will be considered in depth later in this chapter.[842]

It is not known whether there was any public reaction: neither Ibn Wāṣil nor Ibn al-ʻAdīm indicate any. To interpret this, it is important to remember that historians from that era concentrated on the elites' political actions more than on those of the public as indicated formerly. This appears clearly throughout the text of *Mufarrij*. Compared to his report on Shajar al-Durr, in his account of Ḍayfa Khātūn Ibn Wāṣil does not mention or hint at any obvious public reaction. Nevertheless, there are indications throughout his report about that era which show wider splits in social opinion regarding Shajar al-Durr than with Ḍayfa Khātūn. The evidence of this is the presence in the former account of terms such as *al-Bahrīyya*, *al-Ṣāliḥiyya*, *al-Qaymariyya* and *al-Jumdārīyya*, all names that refer to various factions of Mamluks. Each of those groups consists of large numbers of people, which means that the opposition to Shajar al-Durr's political efforts was much stronger than the opposition to Ḍayfa Khātūn's.

The question that should be answered here is why Ibn Wāṣil presents these affairs in detail, while other early historians give them scant attention if any. The answer is clearly that Ḍayfa Khātūn aroused his admiration due to her wise manner of dealing with the dangers surrounding the throne. Based on the above, there is a political lesson to be understood through Ibn Wāṣil's record about her. As stated before, one aim of writing *Mufarrij* was to provide political wisdom. He supports her in her way of making alliances, dealing sternly with any kind of internal plot against her presence, and fostering friendly relations with important neighbouring powers to gain the advantage of support from them in the case where her state might be at risk. Another point to be noted in this

[842] See this Chapter, 'Jihad against the Crusaders, according to *Mufarrij*'.

regard is that Ibn Wāṣil may have wanted to convey in his detailed accounts that Ḍayfa Khātūn's reaction to any threat was not because of greed; rather, it was designed to preserve her grandson's territory. She intended to be firm, to show the extent of her power and to send a message to the other Ayyubid rulers who may have been thinking of taking Aleppo. This was due to her wisdom and careful consideration before taking any definitive stand.

Ḍayfa Khātūn in power based on Mufarrij

Ibn Wāṣil does not stop after making the points discussed above; he is interested in describing the *khātūn*'s strategy in dealing with other Ayyubid forces. When she undertook to ensure the security and stability of the throne in Aleppo, she had to deal with complicated Ayyubid relationships. This section investigates how Ibn Wāṣil shows the scope of Ḍayfa Khātūn's power, her method in acting as an independent ruler, and her diplomatic relationships. It discusses Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of her policies, why he appears to agree with these policies, and what evidence he provides for his arguments.

Ḍayfa Khātūn's independence and sovereignty

Based on Ibn Wāṣil's account in *Mufarrij*, Ḍayfa Khātūn demonstrated her independence and sovereignty as a regent on various occasions. It seems to be Ibn Wāṣil's belief that her early successes in dealing with her opponents gave her more confidence to deal with political issues. He provides many examples that prove her power. The first one was her independent manner after the death of Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad. She had to deal with his successor, his son al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II. As any new sultan would, he wanted to test his power. In 635/1238, as Ibn Wāṣil recounts:

> King al-ʻĀdil, the ruler of Egypt, sent a messenger, asking to establish an agreement between the two parties. He insisted on the principles which his father used to follow in making reconciliations, including the [names

> mentioned in] sermons and on the coinage, as had been the case under the rule of King al-Kāmil. However, al-Ṣāḥiba [Ḍayfa Khātūn] did not agree to these demands, so the messenger returned unsuccessful.[843]

In writing his account, Ibn Wāṣil understood that Ḍayfa Khātūn may have responded in this way for particular reasons: she may not have perceived any benefit in declaring the Friday sermon to be in the name of al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II, or stamping his name on the coin.[844] Certainly, she knew of the atmosphere of hostility between al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II and his brother, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, caused by al-ʻĀdil's mother, who was the main reason that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb had been prevented from becoming sultan, as discussed earlier.[845] The *khātūn* may also have had to decide which of these two competing brothers she should be allied with. She knew the power of King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, who had around twelve thousand Khwārizmian soldiers.[846] At the same time, she recognized the ability and personality of King al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II, as he stood totally opposed to his father in his political approach. Ibn Wāṣil, who an eye witness at that time, understood the difference between al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and his brother al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II; he might have found that all these factors influenced her to refuse the sultan's request. Yet it is noticeable that he does not criticize her behaviour. With this attitude Ḍayfa contradicted the established protocols regarding the relationship with the Sultan of Egypt. This would have been seen by her contemporaries as challenging the sultan, but Ibn Wāṣil apparently approves of her reaction. Perhaps, in his opinion, when dealing with a weak sultan, local rulers should do what they deem best for the interests of their states.

Another political lesson that Ibn Wāṣil appears keen to teach his audience is that this woman, who enjoyed both sharp intelligence and depth of wisdom, did not use

[843] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 179.

[844] El-Azhari, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 39.

[845] See Chapter Two, 'The image of the Jawārī in *Mufarrij*'.

[846] El-Azhari, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 39.

extreme force against any of the other Ayyubid rulers, especially those who did not threaten her. An example of this can be seen after al-Kāmil Muḥammad's death, in the same year the authority in Damascus decided to give the city to the new sultan, al-'Ādil Abū Bakr II, and to install his cousin, King al-Jawād Yūnus, as deputy. But King al-Jawād started to take steps to control Damascus independently.[847] Before addressing the *khātūn's* attitude, it is crucial to highlight Ibn Wāṣil's view of King al-Jawād Yūnus. The historian does not consider him a good politician: he provides evidence of what he thinks about the king's character, describing him as follows:

> Besides his magnanimity and bravery, he showed exceeding generosity and kindness. Nevertheless, his views and his capability of judging matters were weak.[848]

Ibn Wāṣil recounts:

> He sent to his aunt (the ruler of Aleppo), the mother of King al-'Azīz, asking for help. However, she did not listen to him and declined to interfere between him and her other nephew, King al-'Ādil, the son of King al-Kāmil.[849]

In the carefully-worded comment above about King al-Jawād Yūnus, Ibn Wāṣil implies that his intentions toward his cousin, King al-'Ādil Abū Bakr II, are unwise. It also emphasises the astuteness of Ḍayfa Khātūn in understanding the personalities and intentions of the rulers with whom she dealt. He indicates that Ḍayfa Khātūn was too politically savvy to entertain al-Jawād's proposed plan; she did not wish to enter into a hostile relationship with any king, nor did she wish to interfere in any internecine war, as she had to keep her land secure. In Ibn Wāṣil's comparison between the manner of the *khātūn* and that of the king, it is evident that this led him to respect her even more.

[847] Ibn al-'Adīm., *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 671; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar,* vol .7, pp. 922-923.

[848] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 192.

[849] Ibid, vol. 5, p. 192.

Moreover, Ibn Kathīr agrees with Ibn Wāṣil in his evaluation about King al-Jawād Yūnus. However, he does not give Ḍayfa Khātūn the same attention as he does the Ayyubid king; he simply mentions her as the mother of King al-ʻAzīz Muḥammad.[850] A comparison between the account of Ibn Wāṣil and those of other early historians reveals to what extent the former is unique in his assessment of the political role of women, especially with regard to the role of regent.

Another vital point to be mentioned at this juncture is that Ibn Wāṣil provides straightforward evidence of the significant power that Ḍayfa Khātūn enjoyed, even when compared to other powerful kings and sultans. Ibn Wāṣil transmits accounts from Ibn al-ʻAdīm that refer to Ḍayfa Khātūn's position at that time as a suzerain. For instance, he notes in one anecdote that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb sought his aunt's approval when he became Sultan of Egypt, in 637/1239:

> King al-Ṣāliḥ called me [Ibn al-ʻAdīm] and gave me a message for her. He told me to 'Kiss the ground at the feet of *al-Sitr al-ʻĀlī* before her, and tell her that I am her Mamluk, and that she stands in place of King al-Kāmil. I offer myself at her service and will carry out any of her orders. He (Ibn al-ʿAdīm) said, 'Likewise, he asked me to convey a similar message to King al-Nāṣir.'[851]

It is worth mentioning that King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb had at that time achieved remarkable political success. He became the sultan of all of Egypt, while other Ayyūbid rivals ruled smaller territories in Syria, as mentioned previously.[852] El-Azharī contends that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's attitude toward Ḍayfa Khātūn was explicit recognition of the extent of her authority, despite his own great power. Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was successful in his policy, which was well thought out. He wanted to guarantee to Ḍayfa Khātūn that he

[850] Ibn Kathīr shows his point of view about King al-Jawād Yūnus at various points in his record. See, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 27, pp. 229, 248, 277.

[851] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 268.

[852] See Chapter One, 'Historical background'.

would not interfere in Aleppo's politics. He also wanted to ensure her neutrality in the Ayyubid civil war, so that he would not be acquiring new enemies.[853] This political analysis by El-Azharī seems to concur with what Ibn Wāṣil reveals about the extent of her power.

It has been demonstrated that Ibn Wāṣil reports Ḍayfa Khātūn's political actions and interactions to show her power and independence. Moreover, he seems agree with her policies on this point. He does not show in his language any sign that can be interpreted as disapproving. His understanding of the characters of the Ayyubid sultans has led him to agree with the *khātūn's* decisions regarding her interactions with them.

Ḍayfa Khātūn's diplomatic policy

It is clear that Ibn Wāṣil refers to the importance of the diplomatic relationship by addressing Ḍayfa Khātūn's relationship with the Seljuks of Rum, which had the potential for a high level of impact in different aspects, and for both sides. Ibn Wāṣil believes that Ḍayfa Khātūn was highly successful in her relationship with the Seljuk Sultan of Rum, Kaykhusraw II, which brought positive results to Aleppo. This diplomatic relationship started in 634/1237, when Sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad took a stance against the regency of Ḍayfa Khātūn.[854] In the same year Kaykhusraw II not only prevented one of the Turkmen princes from attacking Aleppo, as mentioned before, but he also gave strong support to King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II, swearing an oath to Aleppo's king.[855]

Another major impact of this relationship was that Kaykhusraw II asked the *khātūn* to betroth her granddaughter Ghāziyya, daughter of al-'Azīz Muḥammad, to him,

[853] El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 41.

[854] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 122.

[855] Ibid, vol. 5, p. 131.

and he offered his own sister's hand to King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II in 635/1238.[856] As a result of this political relationship between Aleppo and the Seljuk of Rum, Ḍayfa Khātūn ordered that Aleppo's currency be stamped with the names of Sultan Kaykhusraw II and her grandson, King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II. In modern times a dirham (silver coin) has been found dating from this period. Specialists have disagreed in reading and interpreting the text on this dirham, but Rafʿat Muhammad Nabraw, in his reading of this dirham, mentions that this coin was minted to commemorate this relationship.[857] This means that – irrespective of the child monarch's age – his name was mentioned in the Friday sermon and stamped on the coinage, decrees were issued in his name, and alliances were concluded in his names. Hirschler explains that governance was so closely associated with the ruler himself that it proved impossible to delegate these crucial elements of symbolic representation to any person other than the ruler, even if he was a two-year-old infant.[858] The regent, on the other hand, was not allowed to raise the banners of the sultan, and his (or her) name was not to be mentioned in the sermon or to appear on coins.[859]

Consequently, Aleppo became one of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum's vassal states.[860] The results of this political marriage were immediately apparent when the Seljuk sultan took some lands that were under the administration of King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's deputies and gave them to Ḍayfa Khātūn as fiefdoms.[861] In the same year, the sultan sent

[856] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 162; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 162, al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 386.

[857] Ra'fat Muhammad Nabraw, Dirham Ayyūbī Yusajjilu Muṣāhara Malakīya, *al-'Uṣūr,* (London: Dār al-Marrīkh lil-Nashr, 1987), pp. 95-98 (pp. 97-98).

[858] Hirschler, 'Under-age rule', 37.

[859] Ibid, 42.

[860] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 162; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 7, pp. 330-331. El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 44.

[861] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol.5, p.185; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar* , vol. 7, p. 331.

his envoy to ask her to have the Friday sermons and coinage issued in his name, as reported in *Mufarrij*:

> Ḍayfa Khātūn was hesitant about what he demanded (as she was the mother of King al-'Azīz), but she was advised to agree to it. She accordingly accepted. The Sultan of Rum was praised from the pulpits of Aleppo. The envoy came up to the pulpit and attended the sermon in the presence of the *khātūn*'s minister, Jamāl al-Dīn Iqbāl. Both of them distributed dinars [gold coins] to the public.[862]

In narrating this anecdote, Ibn Wāṣil refers to Ḍayfa's courage, strength, high self-esteem, and confidence. Although she hesitated in the beginning, she took steps that had never been taken before. In *Mufarrij*, there is no record of any similar actions having been taken by other Ayyubid dynasty members, despite the competition and rivalries between them since the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. On her part, Ḍayfa Khātūn abided by her responsibilities as a strong ally. When the Seljuks' lands were attacked by Mongols, she sent her forces to help him.[863] She further gave her support when the Seljuks wanted to attack Amid in Syria in 638/1241. 'She sent supplies and financial support to them from Aleppo'.[864] What is more, she remained loyal to her Seljuk allies, even against other Ayyubid members.

Ibn Wāṣil reports many accounts that suggest his support of Ḍayfa Khātūn. He may have believed that such political alliances made her stronger. Ayyubid rulers asked for her help on a variety of occasions. She had matured to the stage of being able to decide on a strategic basis which requests to refuse and which to accept. Her relationship with al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was a good example of this: as mentioned before, he had Khwārizmian

[862] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 191.

[863] El-Azharī, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 44.

[864] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 295.

troops on his side. However, after his father's death in 635/1238, they changed their loyalty; al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb feared that they might escape, so he sent an envoy to his aunt:

> The Khwārizmians controlled the territory of al-Jazriyya. King al-Ṣāliḥ sent a messenger to his aunt al-Ṣāḥiba, mother of King al-'Azīz, to intercede regarding King al-Muẓaffar, the ruler of Hama.[865] Al-Ṣāliḥ's request was not granted. She asked him to excuse her; this was because of al-Muẓaffar's deed. The messenger asked for help and support for his patron, King al-Ṣāliḥ, in facilitating reconciliation between him and the Sultan of Rum Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw II. The king was answered [but] without receiving benefit.[866]

Ibn Wāṣil's matter-of-fact report indicates that he considers Ḍayfa Khātūn's response to her nephew to be expected, as she could not risk losing her strong relationship with Kaykhusraw II. Yet at the same time, she took a moderate policy stance vis-à-vis her nephew: Ibn Wāṣil records an event showing that she was keen to avoid any inconvenience to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. This was when Kaykhusraw II took Edessa and Sarūj in 635/1238 from King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's possession and gave them to her, but she sought to placate her nephew:

> Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn sent a messenger to Ḍayfa Khātūn. In light of that, she agreed to sign [accepting his gift]. At the same time, she avoided upsetting her nephew, King al-Ṣāliḥ. So, she did not do anything in these lands. When King al-Ṣāliḥ knew of her reaction, he wrote his aunt a letter, saying, 'The entire region is under your control; if you wish to send a delegate to receive this country and other areas, I will be ready to fulfil all your wishes.' So she thanked him and contented him.[867]

Ibn Wāṣil stresses her objective policy, which perhaps in his estimation was successful. She could not give al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb much help in the case of his son, King al-Mughīth 'Umar. The father had left his son in Harran as his deputy. However, the son was afraid he might be captured and escaped in secret from the Khwārizmians when they

[865] The relationship between Ḍayfa Khātūn and King al-Muẓaffar is discussed later in this chapter.

[866] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 179.

[867] Ibid, p. 186.

attacked his land. They followed al-Mughīth, attacked him, and stole all the possessions on his person and in his entourage. He sent word to Ḍayfa Khātūn, his father's aunt, seeking refuge with her.[868]

> He arrived in Manbij, asking for help from the aunt of his father, King al-Ṣāliḥ; [she was also] the mother of King al-ʻAzīz. However, she sent an envoy to him to stop him from proceeding, in a kind manner. The envoy told him, ʻWe are worried that the ruler of Rum, Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn, could ask us to hand you over to him, and we cannot protect you from him.ʼ[869]

Ibn Wāṣil accounts succinctly for Ḍayfa Khātūn's decision with her carefully worded excuse. This suggests that he may have approved of her action.

A further example of her faithfulness to the Seljuk Sultan was in 639/1242 when dealing with al-Muẓaffar Ghāzī (617–644/1220–1247), ruler of Mayyafariqin.

> It happened that he sent an envoy to Aleppo to inform them and ask them for support in case Ghiyath al-Dīn, the sultan of Rum, attacked him. He felt that the latter was preparing to invade this territory; however, the people of Aleppo did not respond to his request.[870]

In general, Ibn Wāṣil seems to have supported Ḍayfa Khātūn in all her actions. If he had not approved, he would have criticized her outright, as was his usual habit when disagreeing with any of the Ayyubid rulers' deeds, as he did with al-Jawād Yūnus. He may have considered that she had taken the right steps to increase the power of her grandson's monarchy, as this policy resulted in a good relationship in the long term between Aleppo and the Seljuks of Rum, which endured even after her death.[871]

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[868] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 385.

[869] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 187.

[870] Ibid, p. 305.

[871] Although al-Nāṣir II, the king of Aleppo, followed the king al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn in 641/ 1234 and honoured him with the *khuṭba* and coinage, the Saljuq sultan intervened in making peace between the Aleppans and their enemy al-Muẓaffar Shihāb al-Dīn Ghāzī in the same year. From his side, al-Nāṣir II sent his aid in the same year to contribute alongside the Saljuqs in fighting against the Mongols (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 305).

From the above account in *Mufarrij*, which is Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of Ḍayfa Khātūn in her policy with other Ayyubid members, she appears to have understood the conflicts and intense competition among the Ayyubid rulers, and she did her best to safeguard her young grandson's territory by forming alliances with one of the strongest political figures in the region. This resulted in Aleppo being privileged among the other Ayyubid states. She refused to be al-Ādil Abū Bakr II's vassal due to his weak personality, yet she followed the Seljuk Sultan because of his power. However, Ibn Wāṣil emphasizes that when she took this decision, she was not in a weak position; rather, she was in as high a position as the Ayyubids who sought her support. Moreover, it was the Seljuk Sultan who had sought this alliance with her, not she who had sought it from him.

The khātūn and her political ethic

This section shows a new side of political character that inspired Ibn Wāṣil in his attitude toward the Ayyubid regent women. Through her positive political behaviour, Ḍayfa Khātūn gave Ibn Wāṣil new insights into the effectiveness of political action which coincides with Islamic principles. In conformity with sound ethics, she did not attack anyone unless they had set out to harm her and her state. There are many examples that provide strong evidence for this ethic. It has already been mentioned that her alliance with other Ayyubid rulers against her brother al-Kāmil Muḥammad was due to his resistance to her political position; but when in 635/1238 King al-Jawād Yūnus asked for her help against al-Kāmil Muḥammad's son al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II (as mentioned earlier), she refused, so as not to harm al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II in any way. Another example was in 638/1240: Ibn al-ʻAdīm mentioned that when he was about to leave Egypt, he met King al-Ṣāliḥ ʻImād al-Dīn Ismāʻīl, the ruler of Damascus. The king gave Ibn al-ʻAdīm a letter to Ḍayfa Khātūn, asking for her support against King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. However, she did

not help him at that time.[872] Her political ethic is apparent in numerous incidents with several rulers, as recounted in *Mufarrij*, as will be shown below.

With al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd of Hama

Another example of her ethical behaviour in *Mufarrij* was that she favoured amnesty, even though she had the power to execute harsh punishment. This principle is clear from her relationship with al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd, the King of Hama. When the alliance was formed against sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad because of his stance against the regency of Ḍayfa Khātūn, al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd differed in his allegiance, as stated in *Mufarrij*:

> The rulers of Homs and the people of Aleppo responded to this and swore [allegiance] to him [King al-Ashraf]. On the other hand, King al-Muẓaffar refrained, and took the side of his uncle, King al-Kāmil.[873]

Ibn Wāṣil depicts in detail Ḍayfa Khātūn's attempts to keep al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd on their side. King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd had sent an envoy to sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad to inform him that he was the sultan's ally. The sultan promised him to take Salamiya from King al-Mujāhid Shīrkūh (581-637/1186-1240), the ruler of Homs, and to give it to al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd in reward for his allegiance.[874] The people of Aleppo sent Ibn al-'Adīm, along with 'Alā' al-Dīn Ṭībgha, the deputy of Aleppo, as envoys, to mediate between king al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd and king al-Mujāhid Shīrkūh. Both kings refused to respond.[875] Al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd demanded Salamiya and al-Mujāhid Shīrkūh refused his request; this was because al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd had sworn an oath to al-Mujāhid Shīrkūh to protect all of the latter's lands. This conflict between the two kings is

[872] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 269.

[873] Ibid, p. 148.

[874] Eddé-Terrasse, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep*, p. 114; Ṭaqqūsh, *Ta'rīkh al-Mamālīk*, p. 354.

[875] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 675.

stated in Abū al-Fidā's records, but he does not indicate that Ḍayfa Khātūn played any role in resolving the problem.[876] In contrast, Ibn Wāṣil explains the cause of the dispute between al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd and Ḍayfa Khātūn:

> Kamāl al-Dīn bin al-'Adīm told al-Muẓaffar, 'Your argument is a kind of denunciation of the covenant that all agreed on.' Al-Muẓaffar replied, 'He broke our covenant and damaged a company of my military. I must attack him. When King al-Kāmil goes to Homs, I will go with him, and I will do my best. Regarding Aleppo, I will expend my soul and my wealth to protect its villages. I will not withdraw the oath that I made in front of al-Sitr al-ʿĀlī and Sultan al-Nāṣir.'
>
> Kamāl al-Dīn bin al-'Adīm said, 'Sir, you know what happened between us and the guardian of Homs with the oaths. He did not act contrary to the covenant. If someone went to Homs, we are supposed to help and support him. In case some troops came from Aleppo to help him, what would happen? I will fight him; whoever fights me, I will fight back.'
>
> It seems that this attitude from the King of Hama angered Ḍayfa Khātūn. When she heard from her messenger Kamāl al-Dīn bin al-'Adīm, she instructed him to return to Aleppo. We went immediately, without farewell. […] The *mihmindār* followed us from Hama, having some orders [for provisions].[877] We accepted nothing from them and continued our journey to Aleppo.[878]

Although Hama was the homeland of Ibn Wāṣil, in his presentation he was with the *khātūn* in her reaction to this behaviour. King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd showed hostility toward Aleppo, and this conflict had been instigated on his part. Ḍayfa Khātūn was therefore quick to act once the threat posed by al-Kāmil Muḥammad had been dispelled by his death. In the same month, she gave orders to the army of Aleppo to go to Hama under her general, Tūrān Shāh Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.[879] She asked them to take Maʿarrat al-

[876] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar,* vol. 3, p. 162.

[877] The *mihmindār* in the Mamluk Sultan's court was in charge of receiving envoys and delegations and providing them with hospitality. A. Saleh, 'Mihmindār', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn Consulted online 12 February 2018 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5183>

[878] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij,* vol. 5, pp. 149-150.

[879] Tūrān Shāh, paternal uncle of al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, not Tūrān Shāh, son of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.

Nu‘mān, a city in al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd’s territory.[880] The troops took the city and surrounded its citadel. At that time, al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd was burdened with worries and grief because of the death of his ally al-Kāmil Muḥammad.[881] Ibn al-Wardī reports this incident briefly: he mentions that the Aleppans surrounded al-Ma‘arra later, captured it, and it was destroyed.[882] Ibn Wāṣil is keen to give a detailed report and finds that this action forced the king to try to resolve issues with Aleppo:

> The messenger of King al-Muẓaffar arrived in Aleppo to ask that tensions be eased, but the message was not considered, and he returned to Hama.[883]

According to *Mufarrij*, the army of Aleppo was able to take control of Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘mān, and then went on to Hama to besiege it. Al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd was trapped in Hama for about six months.[884] In this account, Ibn Wāṣil depicts another example of Ḍayfa Khātūn's prudent personality:

> Hama was not put under a strict siege and no catapults threatened the city. The mother of King al-‘Azīz did not intend to eradicate the kingdom of her nephew, King al-Muẓaffar. She only wanted to retaliate by controlling Ma‘arrat and besieging Hama. She wanted to punish King al-Muẓaffar for supporting King al-Kāmil against her after she had made an agreement with him [al-Muẓaffar]. Thus, she ordered the army to besiege Hama, but without engaging in a fight against it.[885]

In another passage, Ibn Wāṣil further clarifies her intentions.

> The troops did not come very close to the city. They actually camped far away from it. Ḍayfa Khātūn did not want to capture the city from her nephew; instead, she wanted to put pressure on him so that he quit his demand for Ma‘arrat.[886]

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[880] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 181; Abū al-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 162.

[881] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 177; Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta’rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 156.

[882] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta’rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 156.

[883] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 181.

[884] Abu al-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar* , vol. 3, p. 163; El-Azhari, ‘Ḍayfa Khātūn’, 42.

[885] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 182.

[886] Ibid, vol. 5, p. 191.

Abū al-Fidā' opines that the length of the siege period made Ḍayfa Khātūn order the army of Aleppo to leave Hama.[887] Ibn Wāṣil, on the other hand, portrays Ḍayfa Khātūn as the rare politician who was not greedy for power. She was able to occupy Hama, but she did not do this. Her main goal was to teach the king a lesson. She also wanted to send a message to the other Ayyubid powers that she was only acting in the interests of her grandson's throne. Ibn Wāṣil emphasizes this more than once. He may have thereby intended to highlight the significance of her ethic. It is important to note that king al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd was Abū al-Fidā's grandfather.[888] Therefore, the historian tries to show his grandfather as a victor. Ibn Wāṣil, in his evaluation, depends on what Ibn al-'Adīm mentions in his book.[889] Ibn Wāṣil, of course, also draws on what he understood about both rulers' characters.

Ibn Wāṣil asserts that king al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd suffered economically from this siege and had to spend a considerable sum of money to survive it. Yet, true to Ḍayfa Khātūn's real intentions, she withdrew her forces in 636/1238. She kept Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān under her control and Salamiya under that of King al-Mujāhid Shīrkūh, the governor of Homs.[890] According to *Mufarrij*, the hostile relationship between al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd and al-Mujāhid Shīrkūh continued. Ḍayfa Khātūn, on the other hand, stopped causing difficulties for al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd.[891] Such cases are unusual in politics, as the political 'game' encourages expansion of power. However, her actions demonstrated both her power and her principles. It seems that her manner may have inspired Ibn Wāṣil to report on the event in detail.

[887] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 163.

[888] Ibid.

[889] Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol.2, p. 675.

[890] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 198; Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 163; Eddé-Terrasse, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep*, p. 115.

[891] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 96.

The last contact between the two sides was when King al-Mujāhid Shīrkūh died, in 637/1239. His successor was his son, King al-Manṣūr Ībrāhīm. He followed his father's path in dealing with al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd. Therefore, the latter made an agreement with Ḍayfa.[892] As reported in *Mufarrij*:

> Then, King al-Muẓaffar made a compromise with his aunt, Ḍayfa Khātūn, the ruler of Aleppo. Consequently, she allocated him some of the Ma'arrat villages. […] Although King al-Muẓaffar showed [outward] acceptance of his aunt, he was secretly setting up the protocols for [accession to] the sultanate of King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. [893]

In this passage, Ibn Wāṣil interprets King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd's attitude toward his aunt at that moment: it was due to the support that she was giving to King al-Manṣūr Ībrāhīm, as she had been allied with his father. This worried al-Muẓaffar.[894] However, after this point Ibn Wāṣil stops reporting any development in their relationship, perhaps because they were busy due to their conflict with the Khwārizmians; certainly, the death of Ḍayfa Khātūn in 640/1242 ended any further interactions as well.

El-Azhari highlights some of the political skills of Ḍayfa Khātūn in his depiction of the siege of Hama. He believes that Ḍayfa Khātūn's actions show her ability to set specific, clear goals for her force and to select the best of her military officers to lead her army. She made a solid plan to be able to withdraw her army as she wanted. She also selectively received some envoys and refused others. El-Azhari also mentions that (as in the above-mentioned account by Ibn Wāṣil), several villages around Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān were ceded to King al-Muẓaffar as part of his agreement with Ḍayfa Khātūn in 637/1239, the year after the siege of Hama ended.[895] All of these skills that Ibn Wāṣil points out in

[892] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, pp. 255-256.

[893] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 257.

[894] Ibid, p. 257.

[895] El-Azhari, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', 43.

Mufarrij about the *khātūn* reflect his attitude toward the role of women as regent in general and Ḍayfa Khātūn in specific. He thinks that a woman can be a skilled diplomatic and political leader, despite not being as well trained in those fields as her male counterparts would be. This account of Ḍayfa's political involvement clarifies that women are able to plan and execute military strategy—and even wars—using their mental abilities, despite their often weaker physical abilities as compared to men.

In sum, according to Ibn Wāṣil's account, Ḍayfa Khātūn did not seek to dominate for the sake of dominance. If she saw armed conflict as necessary to achieve a specific purpose, she did not balk at it, but when that purpose had been achieved she ceased hostile action, although she could have taken such opportunities to expand her territory. This conduct may be interpreted as sensible prudence and restraint, but it may also be seen as stemming from a mothering attitude toward her family. She did not want to destroy any of them; she wanted to stop their attacks and to show them her strength, so that they would think again before taking aggressive action in future. This sense of familial allegiance and responsibility is another of Ḍayfa's ethics, as described in the following section.

The *khātūn* with her family

The other principal ethic that can be extracted from Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij* is that Ḍayfa Khātūn felt responsibility for her family. For example, in 637/1239:

> Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-ʻAdīm left Aleppo bound for Egypt, as an envoy from Ḍayfa Khātūn, the mother of King al-ʻAzīz. In her message, she asked to let his [al-ʻAzīz's] aunts, daughters of King al-ʻĀdil, travel to and stay in Aleppo…[896]

Neither Ibn Wāṣil nor Ibn al-ʻAdīm mentions the reason for Ḍayfa Khātūn's request, but they may have tried to show that she wished to take care of her sisters.

[896] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 253.

Ibn Wāṣil indicates that another clear example of her ethic of family responsibility appears through her conflict with the Khwārizmians. It has previously been mentioned that she left anyone alone who neither harmed her nor threatened her grandson's throne. Having this policy does not mean that the *khātūn* was weak. She launched campaigns to fight any enemies who sought to take over Ayyubid lands. An event occurring in 638/1240 demonstrates the power of Ḍayfa Khātūn and her military skills. Her brother, King al-Ḥāfiẓ Arslān Shāh,

> …sent to his sister, al-Ṣāḥiba Ḍayfa Khātūn (daughter of King al-'Ādil), the mother of King al-'Azīz, asking her to assume power over the castles of Ja'bar and Balas. As a recompense for these castles, he needed her to cede to him one of Aleppo's territories.[897]

Ibn Wāṣil and other historians such as Ibn al-Wardī mention that the reason al-Ḥāfiẓ Arslān Shāh had taken this action was his illness. He suffered from hemiplegia and was worried that his son would hand these provinces over to the Khwārizmians.[898] The contemporary historian Ibn al-Jawzī records the same historical event but without explanation: 'Al-Ḥāfiẓ handed over Ja'bar Castle to the Aleppans'.[899] Comparing the report of Ibn Wāṣil with the record of Ibn al-Jawzī shows that the manner of presenting an event could change the meaning. For instance, in this episode King al-Ḥāfiẓ Arslān Shāh was in a weak position, while Ḍayfa Khātūn was more powerful. Ibn al-Jawzī avoids referring to the *khātūn* and thus denies her role totally, whereas Ibn Wāṣil, by mentioning her role and the reason that encouraged the king to take this decision, shows the extent of her power—not just compared to her brother but also to the other members of the Ayyubid house.

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[897] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 279.

[898] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 290, Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 167, Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 165.

[899] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 22, p. 370.

Ibn Wāṣil approves of al-Ḥāfiẓ Arslān Shāh's foresight, as the Khwārizmians then launched a ferocious attack on Ja'bar and Balas. Ibn Wāṣil determines the Khwārizmians' reasons for their movements in Syria, and especially the lands belonging to Aleppo:

> They advanced on Hama, but without wreaking havoc on it. This was because the ruler of the city was a client of King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, the ruler of Egypt, and the Khwārizmians were also his clients. They were keen to show him that all of their actions were in his favour, especially in light of the antagonism towards him from Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus.[900]

In fact, considering the relationship between Ḍayfa Khātūn and King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, there was no real hostility on either side, as mentioned before. But the alliance between Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus meant that the Khwārizmians counted Aleppo among their enemies.[901] Ḍayfa Khātūn was in charge of rescuing these places, sending her general, King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in their defence. Unfortunately, her army suffered a terrible defeat, and King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh was seriously wounded and captured along with many of his men.[902] In *Mufarrij*, this episode is reported as follows:

> Ḍayfa Khātūn, the ruler of Aleppo, ordered the army to watch and protect the gates of the city. This made all citizens, even those who were outside the city's walls, apprehensive and worried. Thus, they rushed back into it and carried with them all that they could of their goods and garments.[903]

Ibn Wāṣil then provides a highly detailed account of the destruction of Aleppo's territories and the decimation of its citizens, as in this passage:

> Then they advanced on Manbij. The city was fortified by its walls, [but] they managed to enter it from weak points. They attacked the city by sword on Thursday the ninth of Rabīʿ al-Awwal in the year of 638[/1241]. They killed

[900] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 290.

[901] Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, pp. 501-502.

[902] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 167; Abu Shāma, *al-Rawḍatyn*, p. 275.

[903] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 284.

> a large number of civilians; they damaged its buildings, looted money and other valuables from the people of the city, enslaved the surviving women and children, and committed terrible deeds. For example, some women tried to seek refuge in the mosque of the city. However, the enemy fighters did not refrain from following the terrified women, and committed immoral acts in this holy place. Some of the soldiers did not hesitate to snatch babies from their mothers and throw them on the ground and then capture these women. Then, they returned to their country after ruining and laying waste to everything around Aleppo.[904]

These brutal deeds and the absence of the top-ranking military leader from Aleppo led King al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm of Homs to go to Aleppo to give his support to them.[905] Ḍayfa Khātūn, according to Ibn Wāṣil, appears to have dealt intelligently with this circumstance. She sent her grandson King al-Nāṣir II, who by that time was eleven years old, to welcome King al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm. She wanted her grandson to start participating in political life, and she wanted to safeguard his rights as king. 'It was decided to use the armies to gather and document all of the rights and covenants.'[906] She also took another step to save her dominion:

> Al-Ṣāḥiba, mother of King al-'Azīz, mandated Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-'Adīm as an envoy to her brother King al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl, the ruler of Damascus. She wanted to ensure his [al-Ṣāliḥ's] loyalty to her and to her grandson, King al-Nāṣir.[907]

The third step she took in preparation for the impending armed conflict was to establish friendly relations with a former Khwārizmian leader, 'Alī bin Ḥudayth, who had split from them. 'Ḍayfa Khātūn let him marry some of her maids and gave him fiefdoms to satisfy him.'[908] Ibn Wāṣil describes the battles and related events in detail, and summarises the result:

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[904] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 286.

[905] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 170; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 6, p. 325.

[906] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 287.

[907] Ibid, vol. 5, p. 288.

[908] Ibid.

> This war ended with the Ayyubid army's success. Aleppo's soldiers were able to capture the Eastern lands such as Harran, Edessa, Raʾs al-ʿAyn, Saruj, and Muzar. This realm was added to the kingdom of Aleppo.[909]

It is enlightening to compare Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of Ḍayfa Khātūn with that of another early historian: Ibn Kathīr. The former finds that she demonstrated excellent skill in dealing with the Khwārizmian threat. She was able to steer Aleppo through this violent period in a wise way. The latter historian ignores any effort by the *khātūn*; instead, he makes the King of Homs, al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm, the hero of the political event, and portrays Aleppo with other Islamic forces as his helpers.[910]

In Ibn Wāṣil's view, Ḍayfa was not only a responsible guardian of her grandson, but she also took care of the rest of the family. Despite her political superiority over her contemporaries among the Ayyubids, she was modest in her dealing with them. She respected the ties of kinship and never ruined any of them. This conduct matches with Ibn Wāṣil's knowledge of Islamic teachings regarding relationships with relatives.[911] Any religiously-minded politician might find it difficult to strike a balance between the political chess game that encourages the head of state to expand their borders or to otherwise act with aggression, and what that leader should do to keep to Islamic principles, especially when rivals and potential adversaries are one's own relatives. While some Muslim rulers might invest their political ambitions in fighting, Ḍayfa Khātūn was extremely successful in reaching her goals while adhering to the Islamic concepts of peace-making and fairness. It is evident that Ibn Wāṣil admired her attitude toward her

[909] Ibid, vol. 5, p. 295.

[910] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, vol. 17, p. 256.

[911] Numerous verses in the Quran encourage people to take care of their kin, such as, 'But kindred by blood are nearer to one another regarding inheritance in the decree ordained by Allah. Verily, Allah is the All-Knower of everything' (*Q*, 8:75).

family, and he found it worthwhile to mention this in his history as a praiseworthy political example for subsequent generations.

Jihad against the Crusaders, according to Mufarrij

From *Mufarrij* it is clear that during her seven years as regent Ḍayfa Khātūn was busy establishing the rules to be followed in order to guarantee the best future for Aleppo; she did not have much time to concentrate on the wider regional and long-term issue of jihad against the Crusader invaders. Furthermore, as mentioned before, the shape of the conflict with the Crusaders changed in the late Ayyūbīd era: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's successors differed from him in terms of their attitudes toward resistance. Ḍayfa Khātūn did not participate in any war with the Crusaders unless it became necessary. In 633/1235, the Crusaders observed the political scene in Aleppo when Ḍayfa Khātūn became regent, hoping to benefit from this development. Interestingly, a few women had also ruled as regents in Crusader states, especially Jerusalem.[912] The Crusader kings and their people seemed to hold the same view as Muslim monarchs and their populaces did of what constituted an acceptable role for women in political leadership. They usually tried to find a husband for their queens to be able to rule the state. Crusaders thus may have believed that they understood Muslims' feelings on the matter of female regents, and this encouraged the Templars to attack Baghras.[913]

> They went out this year after the death of King al-'Azīz and attacked the interior areas. They took away loads of livestock and sheep belonging to the Turkmens and others.[914]

[912] The Crusaders had their own version of a regency system such as Melisende (1105 –1161), the regent of Baldwin III (1154- 1161). See Natasha R. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, 1st edn (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), p. 197.

[913] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol.2, p. 161; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 159.

[914] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 132.

To face this danger, Ḍayfa Khātūn prepared a strong army under the lead of her famous commander al-Muʿaẓẓam Fakhr al-Dīn. The army was victorious against the Crusaders.[915] Ibn Wāṣil reports on this in greater detail than does Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and he proudly comments on the event, writing, 'This victory was crucial and one of the most famous battles.'[916]

In 640/1243 Ḍayfa Khātūn again waged jihad when she had a chance to attack the Crusaders. This was as a result of her alliance with King al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm. 'King al-Manṣūr and some of the Aleppo fighters moved towards the border of the [territory held by the] Franks. He planned to launch an attack from the Tripoli area.'[917]

This campaign is the only one that Ḍayfa Khātūn launched against the Crusaders, which may have been because she died later that same year. It seems that because of the death of the *khātūn* this battle did not significantly affect the political landscape between the Muslims and the Crusaders. Ibn Wāṣil appears believe that Ḍayfa Khātūn had proved her skills in both internal and external policy: she was as capable as a man in launching campaigns for jihad and safeguarding Aleppo from any danger caused by the Crusaders or any other enemy.

Final assessment of Ḍayfa Khātūn by Ibn Wāṣil

Ḍayfa Khātūn's place among other Ayyūbīd monarchs

It is clear that Ibn Wāṣil considers Ḍayfa Khātūn a skilled politician. He provides indications of her efforts to maintain Aleppo's prestige among the Ayyūbīd states. The majority of what he writes about her relates to her achievements in the political field. The foregoing sections show several aspects of Ḍayfa Khātūn's political prowess as indicated

[915] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 159.

[916] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab*, vol. 2, p. 650; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 133.

[917] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 311.

by Ibn Wāṣil. This contradicts Tabbaa's assumption that the factor which made it possible for Ḍayfa Khātūn to expend efforts in civic affairs and to become a patron of scholars and mystics was that her seven-year reign was uneventful.[918] Indeed this claim refers to the ignorance of many male academics and scholars about women's political efforts. It reflects some age-old masculine attitudes towards women's political achievements. Generally, they limit women's roles to social work and the arts. Ibn Wāṣil's text provides solid evidence that Ḍayfa Khātūn led a life full of vital political activity, and that she dealt with major and critical events highly effectively. His assessment can be found clearly in his statement about her death. In 640/1243, Ḍayfa Khātūn suffered from an abdominal ulcer, which caused her death:

> She behaved as if she were a sultana. Due to the young age of her grandson, King al-Nāṣir, she took responsibility and managed the kingdom in a perfect way. She lived for approximately fifty-nine years and governed the kingdom for about six years.[919]

Regarding her internal policy and civic affairs, he says:

> She was just to her people. She treated them with great mercy and sympathy. She abolished all unjust levies in the areas of Aleppo. She was kind and generous to the poor and needy, as well as to scholars and people of piety. She used to offer them provisions and gifts. She bestowed charity and gifts to all who requested help and support, to the extent that everyone who needed her help returned happy and satisfied.[920]

In comparing the copious amounts which Ibn Wāṣil writes about her political deeds with his much briefer treatment of her accomplishments in civic affairs, it can be said that his careful and detailed reporting of her political career means that in his assessment she was a good model of a politician compared to the rulers who were her contemporaries. In his estimation, her political influence might be more effective and more profound. In

[918] Tabbaa,'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 22.

[919] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 313.

[920] Ibid.

contrast, there are many women whose main legacy was their charity work, such as Ḍayfa's paternal aunt Sitt al-Shām, the sister of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.[921] Therefore, Ibn Wāṣil is right to consider Ḍayfa Khātūn as unique among the women in her family, and unique among Ayyubid rulers. It could be asked how a traditional male Muslim jurist could be inspired by this boundary-breaking woman. As a regent she had to deal with the council regency that included men. As a Muslim woman, she should avoid direct contact with any men other than close family members, so she was expected to deal with other men from behind a curtain or screen.[922] This is mentioned clearly in *Mufarrij* regarding her interactions with the regency council members, as discussed previously: '…when the whole group reached a decision, the minister Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl would go inside to inform Her Excellency, Ḍayfa Khātūn'.[923]

These statements show that she did not mix with the exclusively male-directed affairs of state: she only contacted men when it was necessary. Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl was allowed to see the *khātūn* since he was a eunuch.[924] Eunuchs were allowed to see women according to Islamic law, as explained before.[925] Considering the foregoing, it is probable that in Ibn Wāṣil's view Ḍayfa Khātūn was a good example of a Muslim woman who deals with politics effectively without contravening Islamic teachings.

Moreover, this statement is a reminder that Ibn Wāṣil himself would have had no direct access to the *khātūn*. Thus, he did not have much opportunity to study her at close

[921] About Sitt al-Shām and her good deeds see Waddy, *Women in Muslim History*, p. 87.

[922] In Islamic law men should lower their gaze and women should screen themselves from that gaze, either by the clothes they wear or by a physical screen (*ḥijāb*). This concept is expressed in several verses of *the Quran*: 24:30-31, 24:60, 33:53, & 33:59.

[923] Ibn Wāil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 119.

[924] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 160; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 377.

[925] See p. Chapter Three, 'Shajar al-Durr's struggle to achieve power during her husband's life according to Ibn Wāṣil'.

range to understand her personality or to write accounts of what took place in her court. Ibn Wāṣil attended the courts of some of the Ayyubid kings, entered into their service, and heard of events from them. He was able to observe their actions on various occasions. This opportunity was not available to him in the case of Ḍayfa Khātūn. Therefore, he made his judgements according to what he had heard about her, and his close friendship with Ibn al-ʻAdīm was certainly fortuitous in this regard. Ibn Wāṣil's care in reporting on Ḍayfa Khātūn's actions, both large and small, is convincing evidence that he found in her life rich material worthy of chronicling as part of his observations on the Ayyubid dynasty at the end of its era. He presented Ḍayfa Khātūn as an exemplary model for both male and female politicians: to tell his readers—and possibly even Muslim women who have political aspirations—what a woman can do to carry out political responsibilities proficiently. Due the fact that the historian had extreme respect toward the Ayyubid family, it is expected that he found her career to be a bright spot in the history of the latter period of this dynasty.

To sum up, based on Ibn Wāṣil's presentation, Ḍayfa Khātūn can be considered an ideal model of a medieval Muslim politician. She gained the utmost respect of her male contemporaries and counterparts, and some of them called her 'Queen'. In Ibn Wāṣil's accounts she is consistently shown in a positive light, and the autonomous political image reflected by her personal seal expresses this as well. She fulfilled the expectations of her role as a responsible ruler with honour, humility, wisdom, piety, and generosity.

Ghāzīyya Khātūn (638-655/1240-1257) according to Mufarrij

This part of the chapter deals with the second example of a female regent in the Ayyubid dynasty, namely, Ghāzīyya Khātūn. As the previous section did with Ḍayfa Khātūn, this section examines Ibn Wāṣil's observations on Ghāzīyya Khātūn's early life

and her approach in dealing with political affairs. The aim of this investigation is to uncover and explore the historian's assessment of her political role.

Ghāzīyya Khātūn in historiography

Ghāzīyya Khātūn was the daughter of King al-Kāmil Muḥammad and the niece of Ḍayfa Khātūn.[926] Her career will be mentioned in brief due to the relative lack of information about her in *Mufarrij*, by comparison to the record on her aunt. Even so, Ibn Wāṣil's account can be considered the most informative source on her life compared to texts by other contemporary historians in whom she is mentioned, such as the works of Ibn al-Jawzī and Abū Shāma.[927] The later generation of the early historians express a similar attitude. An example of this is the historian Abū al-Fidā', who was one of the Ayyubid kings of Hama and a student of Ibn Wāṣil's, as discussed previously.[928] He does not devote much attention to Ghāzīyya Khātūn's political actions in comparison to those of her aunt, Ḍayfa. When the early historians report any political event during Ghāzīyya's regency era, they tend to attribute her political acts and decisions to her son al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II. Ibn Wāṣil, by contrast, portrays Ghāzīyya Khātūn in a manner commensurate with her stature and influence. He shows the nature of her relationship with her son and to what extent she intervened in political affairs, as will be shown later.

Ibn Wāṣil may have been keen to report on her life for two main reasons. First, he is one of the few historians who adequately represent the activities of women in their accounts. Second, she was a regent for al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II, King of Hama, and Hama was Ibn Wāṣil's hometown. The brevity of his account about her may have been because she focused on social work and acts of charity rather than on political issues, as

[926] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 7, p. 304; Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 152.

[927] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*; Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawḍatyn*.

[928] See Chapter Two, 'Ibn Wāṣil's life'.

will be discussed later. Therefore, there were no compelling political events to be recorded such as found during Ḍayfa Khātūn's rule over Aleppo. Indeed, Ghāzīyya's policy with regard to her neighbours can be described as peaceful. Ibn Wāṣil indicates neither any serious fighting nor any alliances between Hama and other contemporary political forces during her regency period. It can be said that Ghāzīyya Khātūn practised diplomatic relations through accessing power via political marriage, as was common at that time. For example, she engaged her son, King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II, to his cousin 'Iṣmat al-Dīn 'Ā'isha Khātūn, daughter of King al-'Azīz Muḥammad of Aleppo and sister of King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II, in 643/1254.[929] The significance of this move was probably her aim to form good relationships with Aleppo.

Additionally, it can be claimed that Ibn Wāṣil largely ignored the history of Hama during this period. Even so, *Mufarrij* can be counted as one of the best primary sources about the history of Hama in this period, as indicated before. The only meeting between the historian and King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II was in 658/1259 in Cairo, after losing Hama to the Mongols when the latter invaded Syria. At that time Ibn Wāṣil's brother was under the service of the king, and he used to speak about Ibn Wāṣil in front of the king. Ibn Wāṣil describes this meeting:

> When I met him to work for him, he attended to me warmly—may God have mercy on him. He was extremely pleased; I stayed with him for the entire period that I spent in Cairo. One day I mentioned Hama to him: I said, 'Your Majesty, God willing, you will regain your monarchy, and my brother will be under your service, and I will come to stay under your shade.' He was surprised at my words, and exclaimed, 'How great our God is, that a person like you has such intelligence and knowledge!' Then he said these words and had this hope, 'How could this [what you have predicted] happen?' I replied, 'God can do that and facilitate it; this is not difficult for Him.'[930]

[929] Abu al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 176.

[930] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 291.

Ibn Wāṣil lived in Hama during the reign of al-Manṣūr's father King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd. According to *Mufarrij* he had been in the service of the king and left Hama after al-Muẓaffar's death in 641/1244, when the child king was nine years old.[931] This explains why the history of Hama was recorded by the historian during the rule of the father, and not during the reign of the son. Moreover, this means that for the entire duration of Ghāzīyya Khātūn's regency, Ibn Wāṣil was not in Hama and thus was unable to be close to its court.

Ghāzīyya Khātūn before power

This section discusses Ibn Wāṣil point of view about Ghāzīyya Khātūn's political presence during the reigns of her husband and son, and his depiction of the reaction from various quarters regarding her position as regent. Additionally, it shows the historian's methodology in presenting her political role. It will show that the nature of her character was the factor that played the leading role in the political incidents at that time. It will prove also that the historian was influenced in his report about Hama at that time by his attitude toward the political roles of women, but not by his feelings for his hometown.

Political role of Ghāzīyya Khātūn in her husband's court

The information about Ghāzīyya Khātūn's early life is sparse. In contrast to what is found in *Mufarrij* about Ḍayfa's early years, none of the chroniclers, not even Ibn Wāṣil, refers to Ghāzīyya's relationship with her father and his court**.** It is supposed that she did not learn much about politics from her father.

As in the case of her aunt, Ghāzīyya Khātūn appeared on the political scene through political marriage. Her father married her to the King of Hama, al-Muẓaffar

[931] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 20.

Maḥmūd, in 629/1231.[932] However, it seems that Ghāzīyya Khātūn did not have as celebrated a wedding as Ḍayfa's. This marriage is referred to very briefly:

> Al-Ṣāḥiba Ghāzīyya Khātūn, the mother of our majesty the sultan al-Manṣūr—God bless his soul—arrived at Hama in the most beauteous appearance and clothing. Hama was decorated to welcome her.[933]

In 632/1234, Ghāzīyya Khātūn produced an heir, King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II.[934] According to this comment from Ibn Wāṣil, it might be that al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd was pleased with his wife Ghāzīyya, and as a result, her son held a special place in his father's heart.[935] She lived in her husband's court for close to ten years, until she found herself in the circumstances which led her to become regent. As had happened with her aunt, Ghāzīyya Khātūn's political career was launched during her husband's mortal illness, in 639/1241.[936]

> Doctors accompanied him to treat him [al-Muẓaffar]. His speech is unclear, hardly understood, and his mind has become weak. Prince Sayf al-Dīn is in charge of planning affairs. This is in consultation with the Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn, the eunuch al-Ṭuwāshī Murshid, and Her Excellency Ghāzīyya Khātūn, daughter of the sultan King al-Kāmil, and mother of King al-Manṣūr—God bless his soul.[937]

Indeed, Ibn Wāṣil may have believed that there was a link between the role of women in the Ayyubid dynasty at the time of their rulers' impending death and their ambitions (or lack thereof) for political power. The period surrounding the death of the ruler was a critically difficult and sensitive time, and it revealed the personality of his

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[932] Abu al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 196; Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 149.

[933] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 290.

[934] Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, vol. 2, p. 15; Aḥmad bin Ībrāhīm al-Ṣābūnī, *Tārīkh Ḥamā* (Cairo: Mu'assasāt Hindāwī lil-Thaqāfa wa-al-Ta'līm, 2015), p. 70.

[935] Al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II had a half-brother, al-Afḍal Abī al-Ḥasan 'Alī. See Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 343; Abu al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 196.

[936] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Arab*, vol. 29, p. 200; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 412; Abu al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar* , vol. 3, p. 173.

[937] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 307.

wife or mother. If she proved herself willing to do her utmost to preserve the throne for the underage crown prince, this indicated that she was aspiring to occupy a position in the political world. It seems that her position was gained according to her manner, if she managed the situation wisely. Her methods initiated her engagement with the political scene.

Ghāzīyya Khātūn becomes regent for her son

Ibn Wāṣil signals that Ghāzīyya took her first political action during her husband al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd's death. It might have also been during his illness, as this lasted for two years and nine months.[938] Generally, the tense and quickly shifting political atmosphere after the death of a king required quick and efficient action to prevent any conflicts over a vacant throne. As mentioned previously, when the heir to the throne is still a minor, forming a regency council was the most practical solution. Al-Nuwayrī reports the death of al-Muẓaffar Maḥmūd but says nothing about the regent or the regency council. Ibn Wāṣil, in contrast, describes it in detail:[939]

> When King al-Muẓaffar died—God have mercy on him—his son the sultan, King al-Manṣūr Nāṣir al-Dīn Abu al-Ma'ālī Muḥammaad, became the sovereign. His age was ten years, one month, and thirteen days. His father's chief of staff, Prince Sayf al-Dīn Ṭughrubil, was in charge of organizing the affairs of state. The consultation regarding the state involved Sharaf al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Anṣārī, al-Ṭuwāshī Shujā'a al-Dīn Murshid al-Manṣūrī, and the minister Bahā' al-Dīn bin Tāj al-Dīn. They all were committed to abide by the orders of al-Ṣāḥiba Ghāzīyya Khātūn, daughter of the sultan King al-Kāmil, mother of the sultan King al-Manṣūr. [940]

Ibn Wāṣil may have wondered whether the success of Ḍayfa Khātūn in her methods of seeking and mobilizing power had encouraged Ghāzīyya Khātūn to follow her path.

[938] Abū al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 173.

[939] al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Arab*, vol. 29, p. 309.

[940] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 345.

The regency council at Hama was in its size and composition was quite similar to the regency council in Aleppo. However, everything was effectively under Ghāzīyya Khātūn's control.

Reaction to Ghāzīyya Khātūn as regent

The difference in Ghāzīyya's personality compared to her aunt's is apparent in her focus on legitimizing her and her son's political presence by obtaining the acknowledgment of the Abbasid caliph al-Muṣta'ṣim Billāh.[941] This is in contrast with her aunt, who ignored the caliph. Ibn Wāṣil refers to the actions of the caliph and the sultan in response to Ghāzīyya's request for their acknowledgment:

> As soon as King al-Muẓaffar, the ruler of Hama, passed away, the judge Shihāb al-Dīn bin 'Abd Allāh bin 'Abd al-Mun'im bin Abī al-Dam sent the judge of Hama to Baghdad. He wanted to inform the Abbasid caliph, al-Musta'ṣim Billāh, about the demise of King al-Muẓaffar. The messenger judge carried with him the sword and the armour of the deceased king.[942]

In this passage Ibn Wāṣil does not stop to present his assessment regarding Ghāzīyya Khātūn's deed when she sought the caliph's acknowledgement. He simply reports the events as they happened. Nevertheless, his opinion can be understood from his comments about her peaceful personality, as mentioned before. It appears from *Mufarrij* that the caliph acknowledged Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb but did not acknowledge Ghāzīyya Khātūn or her son. Ibn Wāṣil himself was a witness to the ceremony for al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.

> The envoy came to the sultan's vestibule, in my presence. Then, the coronation speech was recited in public. The sultan wore the gold-studded black royal outfit and put on a turban and a robe and carried his sceptre. …… Afterwards, he rode in a gold decorated ceremonial Markūb It was an enjoyable day and a great celebration.[943]

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[941] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 420; Abu al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 173.

[942] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol, 5, p. 346.

[943] Ibid, pp. 351-352.

In contrast with his father al-Kāmil Muḥammad's attitude towards Ḍayfa Khātūn, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb gave al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II and his mother his dedicated support:

> When the preacher Zayn al-Dīn arrived in Cairo, King al-Ṣāliḥ honoured him and accepted the presents that were given to him. He [al-Ṣāliḥ] also promised to support in a good way his nephew the Sultan al-Manṣūr, God bless his victory.[944]

It is noticeable that Ibn Wāṣil does not make any comment, whether negative or positive, on the caliph's response regarding a woman taking a position of leadership on the political scene. It is interesting to note that al-Musta'ṣim Billāh rejected Shajar al-Durr's role as a sultana strongly and mockingly, but he ignored the regent roles of the Ayyubid princesses altogether. In his view, this reaction from the caliph was likely for two reasons: first, as regents these women did not threaten men's power or compete with them; and second, the model followed by Ḍayfa Khātūn had already proved to be a sensible one, and this may have dissuaded him from taking any action to remove Ghāzīyya Khātūn. Indeed, it is probable that the female regent position seemed more acceptable to the caliph than that of sultana. Ibn Wāṣil's opinion of the caliph's reaction is not clear; he avoids discussing it altogether. This reflects his attitude toward the caliph's skills as a politician. Ibn Wāṣil usually gives his opinion openly when he mentions any politician's death. As indicated earlier, he avoids giving any details about the caliph's political manner when he mentions the caliph's death.[945] As mentioned previously, al-Musta'ṣim Billāh was the last of the Abbasid caliphs, and was killed by the Mongols.[946] So, his death is a prominent historical event that made a significant impact on the Muslim world at that time. It can be inferred from the historian's avoidance of making any comment and judgment about the caliph's death that he did not approve of the caliph or

[944] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 347.

[945] See Chapter Three, 'Ramifications of Shajar al-Durr's accession, from Ibn Wāṣil's viewpoint'.

[946] See Chapter Two, 'Historical background'.

view his political achievements as praiseworthy, not to mention the caliph's attitude toward the female regents of the Ayyubid dynasty. Modern scholars are more openly critical of the caliphs. Mernissi, for example, asserts that the caliphs did not accept any woman's presence in politics, as they did not believe that women had the relevant skills.[947]

There was no apparent resistance from people in Hama to Ghāzīyya Khātūn's role as regent. Ibn Wāṣil does not report any internal or external threat. The caliph's reaction was the only opposition to the regency of Ghāzīyya Khātūn. It may be that Ḍayfa Khātūn and her solid reputation in her career helped Ghāzīyya Khātūn in establishing her presence in political life. Also, it is possible that because Ghāzīyya Khātūn did not play the political game as her aunt did, she did not make enemies during her regency period.

Ghāzīyya Khātūn and political action

Ibn Wāṣil tried to report any events that he had heard about, so he reported the general news. This explains why any mention of her in his texts is sporadic rather than consistently present, as in the case of her aunt. Nevertheless, even small anecdotes can provide a glimpse of the relative extent of her power. For instance, Ibn Wāṣil believes that Ghāzīyya Khātūn was not totally independent in her decision-making. An example of this occurred in 652/1254 when Shams al-Dīn Abī Tahir bin al-Bārzī was appointed as a judge.[948] The account in *Mufarrij* states:

> In Muḥarram in this year Judge 'Imād al-Dīn bin al-Quṭb was installed in Hama. He had resigned in Egypt before relocating to Damascus. After a few days, he died. The sultan, King al-Manṣūr—God bless his soul—appointed

[947] Mernissi, *Sulṭānāt mansīyāt*, p. 37.

[948] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 486.

> Judge Shams al-Dīn Abī Tahir Ībrāhīm bin Hibat Allāh bin al-Bārzī—God have mercy on him..[949]

According to the passage above, it seems that judge ‘Imād al-Dīn bin al-Quṭb was appointed by Ghāzīyya Khātūn, although she is not clearly mentioned. The judge to succeed him was chosen by King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II. This shows that Ghāzīyya did not occupy the same position of power as Ḍayfa Khātūn. On the other hand, Ibn Wāṣil reports an incident that took place in the same year, and which points to King al-Manṣūr’s trust and respect of his mother's suggestions. Al- Manṣūr wanted to purchase a slave; some of them were shown to him in the presence of his mother. He chose only the ones that his mother advised him to buy.[950] Ibn Wāṣil relates an anecdote about this that reveals her wisdom:

> When King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II wanted to choose slaves, he was shown two, one of whom had white skin, and the other of whom had brown skin. The latter one became the Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars. Ghāzīyya Khātūn was behind the curtain watching them when her son asked her for her opinion. She advised him to buy the white Mamluk, but not the one with the brown skin, as she recognized the apparent evil in his eyes. In the end, King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II changed his mind and rejected both slaves. The mother was happy with this decision. Instead, the slaves were taken to Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, who bought them.[951]

It is worth noting that al-Ẓāhir Baybars killed his master, Sultan al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz, to become the new Sultan of Egypt in 568/1260. Ibn Wāṣil may have understood Ghāzīyya Khātūn’s feeling of foreboding when she saw al-Ẓāhir Baybars. If King al-Manṣūr had taken al-Ẓāhir Baybars, the latter may have killed her son. Ibn Wāṣil comments on this story by saying: ‘Ownership is for God, he bestows it upon whom he wills.’[952] Another point to be added regarding this story is that Ibn Wāṣil indicates that

[949] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 177.

[950] Ibid, p. 339.

[951] Ibid.

[952] Ibid.

Ghāzīyya Khātūn was watching the slaves behind the curtain. He may have wanted to emphasize the way that the Ayyubid princesses used to deal with such events, even when they held power and practised politics. As a judge, he probably is keen to respond to the religious traditionalists, people who were entirely against the political participation of women, by showing that religious mores can be upheld even while a woman is in a leadership position.[953]

Ibn Wāṣil refers to another side of Ghāzīyya Khātūn's character: that is, her preference for charity work. He comments:

> …the mercy of God be with her, she established remarkable endowments. These included two villages on the Orontes River. One of the villages was called Zulqiyya, which contained a large orchard, contiguous to the eastern bank of the river. Another village was called 'Uqābiyya, on the western bank. [Yet another] village was called Qaysariya [Caesarea], near the north of Hama. Finally, there was the village of Yʿardūd. She dedicated some revenue from these endowments for the purpose of ransoming captives. The rest of the endowments were dedicated for the Quran reciters, to the soul of her deceased daughter, and for donations at times of celebration and festivity.[954]

Ibn Wāṣil in this part of his text focuses on her righteousness and acts of goodness. In doing so, he seems to excuse her for not taking any significant political action, as she was busy with charitable deeds.

Ibn Wāṣil's final evaluation of Ghāzīyya Khātūn

Ghāzīyya Khātūn died in 655/1257.[955] In a sympathetic way, Ibn Wāṣil writes about her death, showing her strong maternal feelings for her son. He conveys her concern over the political future of Hama, commenting, 'She died, God have mercy on her, at the age

[953] The traditionalist religious attitude toward the political presence of women is discussed on p. 186.

[954] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 210.

[955] Abu al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 196.

of fifty-five, with regret in her heart because her son was childless.'[956] Finally, Ibn Wāṣil gives his overall evaluation of her life and career. He summarizes her approach to political life in this brief statement:

> Her life course—God have mercy on her soul—was good. She was veracious and righteous. She also was keen to establish justice.[957]

Ibn Wāṣil's account of Ghāzīyya Khātūn's life highlights the fact that in spite of her peace-loving, family-oriented personality, she cared about the political future of Hama. This explains why she was unhappy that her son King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II had no descendants. This was despite the fact that she had betrothed him to the daughter of King al-'Azīz Muḥammad (which she had done in order to ensure strong support from Aleppo for her son). Ibn Wāṣil likely understood that her political moves were in order to safeguard the throne via diplomatic efforts, as thanks to her policy of non-aggression, she did not have conflicts with any of the other Ayyubids. A final but salient point regarding Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of the political role of Ghāzīyya Khātūn: it is noteworthy that he does not refer to her as a 'queen', whereas he refers to her aunt, Ḍayfa, as 'Queen' as cited before. This is a further indication of Ghāzīyya's relatively weak impact on the political map of the Ayyubid dynasty as a whole.

To sum up, Ibn Wāṣil shows his respect for Ghāzīyya Khātūn. Although he is from Hama, where she lived and ruled, he does not find in her biography any political facts of such significance as would merit detailed mention. This may be due to her calm, peaceful character, which was reflected in the general atmosphere of the state during her regency period. Unlike her aunt, she did not have to sacrifice a great deal to maintain her presence among the Ayyubid kings. It is not known to what extent the political

[956] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 264.

[957] Ibid, p. 211.

achievement of Ḍayfa Khātūn helped to facilitate Ghāzīyya Khātūn's access to power and to her position in government. Ibn Wāṣil does not mention any link between the two women. It is likely that in his view the kinship and political marriage ties between the two ensured a similar status for both.

The impact of the regent mother on the policy of the young king

In this part there will be a brief consideration of the influence that the female regents had on the underage ruler in shaping his political approach. This aspect of the unique role of a mother (or grandmother) regent is another reason why Ibn Wāṣil considers Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn to be good politicians. Furthermore, the political impact of a mother on her son can be greater than that of a father.

King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II of Hama

Ibn Wāṣil appears to have believed that a mother has a strong effect on her son in terms of the development of his personality and his methods of dealing with political affairs. He emphasizes this clearly in his writing about Ghāzīyya Khātūn:

> Her sons, King al-Manṣūr and his brother al-Afḍal, learnt from her many of her good ethics. He [al-Manṣūr] took on the duty of governance and of wisely fulfilling his duties.[958]

Applying the above statement to the career of King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II, it is clear that his personality was not very far removed from that of his mother, Ghāzīyya Khātūn, as his policies can be described to have been peaceful, too. Ibn Wāṣil recounts several stories that reveal the king's ethic. One took place in 658/1260, when Syria was attacked by the Mongols, who captured Aleppo and then advanced on Hama. Having seen how the Mongols laid waste to Aleppo when that city refused to surrender, al-Manṣūr

[958] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 211.

Muḥammad II left Hama without any resistance, fleeing to Cairo.[959] There al-Manṣūr was under the protection of the Mamluk Sultan al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz, and he managed by his good manners to gain the sultan's love and respect:[960]

> He [al-Manṣūr] used to meet with him [al-Muẓaffar Qutuz], the majority of his [al-Manṣūr's] time accompanied by some magnificent and powerful racehorses. He [al-Manṣūr] used to compete with King al-Muẓaffar and also beat him [al-Muẓaffar] on the racecourse. After every race, he[al-Manṣūr] would present him [al-Muẓaffar] with the horse that had won the race. He [al-Manṣūr] did that several times with the king [i.e., al-Muẓaffar Qutuz], which paved the way for him [al-Manṣūr] into the heart of the king, who loved him very much. Thus, he [al-Manṣūr] was promised to be given a certain territory in the case that they defeated the enemy [the Mongols]. The king [al-Muẓaffar Qutuz] fulfilled his promise.[961]

It is worth mentioning that Sultan al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz gave Hama back to King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II in that same year because of their good relationship.[962] This account in *Mufarrij* is an indication of the considerable influence of the regent mother on her son's ethic of establishing friendly relations with other heads of state.

Al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II of Aleppo

Interestingly, Ibn Wāṣil does not discuss the extent of Ḍayfa Khātūn's influence on her grandson as he did with the royal family in Hama. It seems that he noticed similarities in the policies of both kings, al-Nāṣir and al-Manṣūr, and their regents. With regard to the personality of King al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II, he was like his grandmother Ḍayfa Khātūn in terms of his decisive actions and strong political impact on the Ayyubid map relative to other kings in Syria. This led the Mamluks in Damascus to appeal to him when

[959] Abu al-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 209; Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193-1260* (New York: SUNY Press, 1977), p. 350.

[960] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, pp. 270-272; al-Ṣābūnī, *Tārīkh Ḥamā*, p. 70.

[961] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 272.

[962] Ibid, pp. 294-295.

Shajar al-Durr became sultana, as mentioned before.[963] In response to their request, he took Damascus and began planning to capture Egypt.[964] Ibn Wāṣil comments on the ability of this king:

> By the time of the death of his grandmother, King al-Nāṣir was about 13 years old. He had almost reached adulthood. So, he started to exercise some aspects of authority, including giving orders and making decisions. He also practiced in the Court of Justice to hear grievance cases from the public. He used to do this every Monday and Thursday. However, he was still consulting Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl, the *khātūn*'s minister, and Judge Jamāl al-Dīn bin al-Qufṭī on various administrative matters of the kingdom.[965]

From this account by Ibn Wāṣil, it can be understood that the Ayyubid regent woman could establish the basis for a general policy to be executed by the young king even after her departure from the scene. Ibn Wāṣil seems to find that the female regent can be highly effective in teaching the young king skills that would serve him well in political office. In his estimation, apparently, she was successful at this even without having the same level of instruction and experience as her male counterparts, and this was a quality unique to regent women. Ibn Wāṣil considered that the Ayyubid regent woman might be more concerned about safeguarding the throne than a male regent would be, as he might be tempted to remove the young king in order to assume power himself.

From Ibn Wāṣil's depiction it can be surmised that al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II of Hama and al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II of Aleppo grew up under the motherly care of their respective regents, and that each king's political conduct was like that of his own regent. On the whole, Ibn Wāṣil's assessment is that the Ayyubid regent women had a substantial impact on these young kings.

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[963] See Chapter Three, 'Ramifications of Shajar al-Durr's accession, from Ibn Wāṣil's viewpoint'.

[964] al-Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir al-ināfa,* vol. 2, p. 92; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm,* vol. 7, p. 6; 'Āshūr, *Miṣr wa al-Shām,* pp. 185-186; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya,* vol. 17, p. 309.

[965] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij,* vol. 5, p. 313.

Ḍayfa Khātūn, Ghāzīyya Khātūn, and Shajar al-Durr according to Ibn Wāṣil

The current section will consider the differences in the political roles of Ḍayfa Khātūn, Ghāzīyya Khātūn, and Shajar al-Durr, according to *Mufarrij*. It will examine Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation of and attitude to the roles of women as queen and as regent. Does this chronicler favour one role over the other, and why?

From Ibn Wāṣil's comments about the Ayyubid princesses and about Shajar al-Durr, and examining the language he uses when discussing them, it can be inferred that he strongly supported the role of the female regent, much more than that of sultana. It might be asked why Ibn Wāṣil preferred the political role of regent adopted by the Ayyubid princesses and to which factors this might be due. In his view there were important differences between Shajar al-Durr and the Ayyubid princesses, in their methods of obtaining power and in their political behaviour. For one, neither of the regents made any political mistake so significant as to negatively affect their states; the same cannot be said for Shajar al-Durr. Moreover, it is likely that Ibn Wāṣil favours each *khātūn*'s way of dealing with men according to Islamic mores, as they carried out their responsibilities while veiled and each kept a prudent distance between her and the men of state with whom she interacted.

Ibn Wāṣil does not mention anything about the way Shajar al-Durr's interactions with the men of her court took place. This does not mean that Shajar al-Durr did not follow Islamic teachings in this regard. The lack of information in *Mufarrij* about her way of dealing with men might simply be because her reign lasted just eighty days, and for the most part she ruled in conjunction with her husband, Sultan 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak. These

differences may have affected Ibn Wāṣil's attitude. Tabbaa makes some brief points that refer to them. Regarding Ḍayfa Khātūn, he states:

> Ḍayfa Khātūn, Syria's sole [*sic*] female Ayyubid ruler, impresses modern scholars by her influential, though discreet, almost self-effacing form of sovereignty. Before and after her accession to the regency, she worked within the Ayyubid system, avoiding controversial acts and veiling herself from the public eye by using the regency council as an intermediary and by living a life of profound piety.[966]

Drawing a contrast with Shajar al-Durr, he observes:

> Compared to the better-known Queen Shajar al-Durr of Egypt, she appears distinctly demure. Although today we might be more attracted to Shajar al-Durr's more assertive personality and disruptive acts, she was in the end far less effective as a Queen. The Egyptian Queen suffered a horrific death for alleged transgressions and left the country with a shredded dynasty that was soon taken over by the Mamluks. Ḍayfa Khātūn, on the other hand, left two important monuments and a legacy of piety and tolerance.[967]

It seems that the factors considered by Tabbaa were the same factors considered by Ibn Wāṣil. Furthermore, what is said about Ḍayfa Khātūn in the above passage can also be applied to Ghāzīyya Khātūn. Therefore, the author of *Mufarrij* seems to have evaluated these women leaders along similar lines as Tabbaa, as he does not criticize the princesses the way he does Shajar al-Durr, in particular for the latter's assassination of her husband. Nonetheless, Ibn Wāṣil appears to adopt an impartial stance towards Shajar al-Durr, as he praises her for her good deeds when her first husband, King al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, died. He also tries to justify her mistake in killing her second husband, as mentioned in the previous chapter.[968] Nevertheless, in his evaluation, the Ayyubid princesses excelled in their role as guardians of their young kings' thrones. Thus, this

[966] Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 30.

[967] Ibid, p. 31.

[968] See Chapter Three, 'Shajar al-Durr's death according to *Mufarrij*'.

reflected the general interest of their Muslim subjects, and was the opposite of Shajar al-Durr's ethic, as she had wanted the throne for herself.

Tabbaa interprets the political behaviour of Ḍayfa Khātūn (which can also be applied to Ghāzīyya Khātūn). He explains why her rule was accepted even by the public:

> Furthermore, Ḍayfa abstained from claiming for herself the classical emblems of Islamic rulership, namely demanding that coins be minted in her name and the Friday *Khutba* [sermon] be pronounced in her name. Keenly aware of the limits of female power and boundaries of acceptable behaviour, she walked a fine line between her *de facto* sovereignty and her *de jure* position as simply the grandmother and advisor to the future sultan. Symbolically, the line of male succession in the Ayyubid dynasty of Aleppo continued uninterrupted despite her regency that protected it, which may explain the public's tolerance of her rule. [969]

In *Mufarrij* there is no indication of any action being undertaken by the princesses to compete with the men in politics. Ibn Wāṣil's accounts of their consultations with their regency council members and other men in high office make it clear that the Ayyubid princesses did not ignore the important political role of men, and they certainly did not take any provocative actions to remove men from their positions of authority. Instead they invested the statesmen's skills and abilities. Moreover, they did not seek titles and honorifics, as Shajar al-Durr did: the only titles that the Ayyubid princesses obtained were those accorded to any lady of that era —even commoners—as explained before. If any other title or honorific was mentioned to honour them it might have been informal, and not official, in addresses by their subjects or statesmen and recorded by contemporary historians, but there is no indication in *Mufarrrij* that they sought any title. Nevertheless, honorifics and titles did come to them, and Ḍayfa Khātūn received more of these. For instance, Ibn Wāṣil and Ibn al-'Adīm called her *al-Khātūn al-Jalīla* (her Majesty the Princess), *al-Malika al-Khātūn* (the Queen Princess), '*al-Ṣāḥiba*' (her Excellency), and

[969] Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 22.

al-Sitr al-ʻĀlī (the high shield). The overall meaning of these titles when taken together is 'elevated curtain and impregnable veil', which are metaphors for virtue and chastity.[970] In addition, it is possible that Ibn Wāṣil was pleased and felt that Islamic teachings were being revived because these Ayyubid princesses had applied the principle of consultation (*shūra*) during their rule. This principle had practically disappeared from governance in these Muslim states since Muʻāwiya bin Abī Sufyān when he appointed his heir, as mentioned earlier.[971] These female regents and their respect for Islamic law may have inspired him in his chronicling of their political lives.

Another strong point of distinction between the princesses and Shajar al-Durr is mentioned by Tabbaa:

> The princesses of the Zangid and Ayyubid dynasties of Upper Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt had a great deal of respect and a royal status rarely accorded to court women before them. While this does not indicate anything of their political power or legal status as independent agents, it does indicate that they enjoyed a "public" profile and notable presence. Indeed, they form the first group of women who are named on the inscriptions of their own monuments and in the contemporary texts. Although their person was hidden from view by veils, cloaks, and curtains, their actions were highly visible.[972]

These accounts by Tabbaa of the presence of the Ayyubid princesses do not refer to any political acts, but only to their contributions to architecture. Indeed, it can be said that there is possibly another political angle of their presence, beyond that of architectural patrons. This relates to the increased political engagement of women during that age. They followed the Ayyubid men in enhancing the Sunni branch of Islam and supported Sufism to gain this group's support.[973] This can be inferred by their architectural

[970] Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 22.

[971] See this chapter, 'The regency position in the Islamic sources'.

[972] Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn'', p. 19.

[973] As that time, Sufism represented a common tendency towards mysticism in Muslim society.See 'Āshūr, *Miṣr wa al-Shām*, 128.

patronage and deeds of charity. So, in this regard, they also practised politics in the social domain. Additionally, the regency system might have given the Ayyubid princesses the stability to be able to focus on this political field, which reflects their intelligence in playing the political game. This is in contrast with Shajar al-Durr, who spent seven years in power with her husband, during which time she was in constant conflict with other forces as she struggled to maintain her throne. The only architecture which pays testimony to her reign was the cemetery which she and her husband built, called al-Rawḍa.[974] One final point to be reiterated here is that in Ibn Wāṣil's account a political role for a woman as a regent is portrayed as more acceptable than a role as an independent queen. It might be thus because the former role is compatible with Islamic law and with the structure of the Islamic society.

If the Ayyubid princesses were more successful than Shajar al-Durr in their methods of seeking and executing power, the question needs to be posed: why is it that they have not received any attention from most modern historians? It may be because some of these modern historians are the products of societies which have marginalised, if not completely rejected, women's presence in politics. Therefore, they have ignored any successful efforts on the part of women. Shajar al-Durr, by her audacious deeds, made a name for herself in history. This may be the reason some historians mention her: as an exception to the rule.

Mernissi distinguishes between two kinds of female politician. She believes there is a difference between women who practise power as mothers and wives, and women who became independent queens. In her passage on al-Khayzurān, the mother of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, she comments:

[974] Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn', p. 19.

> She only held power with the consent of, and through, a man. Her political actions could only appear on the public stage masked by the presence of men.[975]

Mernissi gives a reason for that mother not having had a chance to practise politics as a queen:

> She never considered changing the rules of the game, of taking power directly. She accepted the division of the world into two parts- the harem for women and public life for men […]. It was not so much her status as a woman or as a slave that blocked her political career. It was the fact that, as a woman, she belonged to the harem, the territory of obedience. Theoretically, in Islam, public space is the arena for taking the initiative and making decisions in all matters, especially political affairs: but public space was forbidden to women. Again, involvement in political matters necessarily means taking charge of war making: it assumes the act of killing. By contrast the household, women's territory, is the territory of life, sex, and of reproduction. Women give birth, men make war and go hunting. [976]

Indeed, this claim from Mernissi is partly correct as a theory, but in practice, nothing can arguably stop an ambitious woman from reaching her goal, as long as that goal is realistically placed. Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn are good examples of this. They practised politics as real queens who had the same authority as men. Ḍayfa Khātūn was effectively able to form diplomatic relations with her neighbours. This resulted in significant benefits for Aleppo. She made all the Ayyubid kings seek her friendship, and she strategized to wage wars against her enemies, winning many victories.

So as to fairly evaluate the accuracy of Ibn Wāṣil's record of the regent courts, it is important to measure to what extent the chronicler was close to these two courts. This can be done by assessing his sources about both regents. Regarding Ḍayfa Khātūn, the first and most important of his sources is Ibn al-ʻAdīm, as stated before. The second is Ibn Wāṣil himself. He travelled to Hama in 640/1243, and then he left for Baghdad with King

[975] The English translation was taken from Mernissi, *Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 51.

[976] The English translation was taken from Mernissi, *Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 63.

al-Muẓaffar Maḥmud. In his journey with the king he visited Aleppo twice in 641/1244. He spent about two months in this journey. It is obvious that he enjoyed the king's trust, as he was chosen to go with him. Certainly as a historian he would have spoken with the king about the latter's relationships with other political figures. It was his chance to study the king's personality and to observe his manner and reaction. Furthermore, when the historian was in Hama he worked with Shaykh 'Alam al-Dīn Qayṣar, who was an inventor and a mathematician. They worked together to make a ball of wood on which they drew diagrams of plants.[977] Therefore, the King of Hama can be counted as one of the historian's sources. When Ibn Wāṣil moved to Egypt he accompanied his close friend, Prince Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Hadhbānī, who was one of the closest statesmen to Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's heart. The historian travelled with Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Hadhbānī to perform the Hajj in 649/1251. The two men spent four months on their journey. As he states in *Mufarrij*, he spent considerable time in conversation with the prince. The prince trusted him, for he showed the historian all the sultan's letters that came to the prince at that time.[978] They must have spoken about the Ayyubid kings and their individual personalities and they discussed many political issues, which no doubt enhanced the historian's knowledge about the political atmosphere around him. Thus, the historian gleaned much information from the prince, such as the relationships between Egypt, Hama, and Aleppo. The most crucial point is *Mufarrij* about the two regent princesses.

With regard to Ghāzīyya Khātūn, there is not much difference in his sources about the *khātūn*. Prince Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Hadhbānī, King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmud, and Ibn Wāṣil himself, as he visited Hama more than once in 640/1242 and 641/1243 Moreover, he

[977] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 344.

[978] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 172; al-Tadmuri, *Mufarrij*, Introduction, vol. 6, p. 14.

travelled to Cairo about five times from 642/ 1244 to 651/1253.[979] Another important source was his brother, who worked for King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II. As indicated before, the historian met the king in Egypt. Certainly he had several occasions and opportunities to gather information about the king and his mother.[980]

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has discussed the regency role of women in the late Ayyubid dynasty. In the same vein as in Chapter Three, this chapter has dealt with the political aspects concerning the Ayyubid regents individually and in depth, in order to examine Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation of their political role and the factors which influenced his assessment. The foregoing demonstrates that this system has been discussedin current literature but not by the Muslim jurists during the medieval period. It has sought to present the framework of this political system by studying its conditions, the regent's duties toward the state, and the dangers that could be posed by the regent. There have been a number of regent women during the course of Islamic history, the most famous of who have been mentioned. The position of the regent women has been elaborated. Through the illustration of key events in the historical record it was possible to follow improvements in the role of regent women and how this impacted on the political situation of their state, either positively or negatively.

Ibn Wāṣil's attitude toward the regents and their role in saving or threatening the state has been explored. This chapter has shown that Ibn Wāṣil is a strong advocate of the regency system. He evaluated the political performances of the two notable women regents of the late Ayyubid dynasty, Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn, and he found

[979] Tadmurī, ' Introduction, *Mufarrij*, vol. 6, p. 20.

[980] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 5, p. 344.

them to have been highly successful. Both of them were able to safeguard their states during their regency period, despite their differing interests. The chapter has provided proof that Ibn Wāṣil is superior among the Ayyubid dynasty's historians who have written about both these women; he surpasses even Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Ḍayfa Khātūn's own ambassador. The author of *Mufarrij* presents his reasons for taking this atittude regarding both princesses. They were raised among able politicans, which gave them the experience that made them capable of holding this position. He found in their respective reigns some political ethics rarely seen in political history. For example, their diligent defence of the right of their childern to ascend the throne, and their political manner toward their rivals. Another new aspect shown in this chapter is the high impact of the regent woman on her child's political behaviour.

It seems that Ibn Wāṣil's perspective may have been shaped by several factors. First, from his religious education, he knew that in Islam women were not prohibited from practising politics, but did so under certain conditions and in a manner compatible with Islamic norms and mores. For example, the Prophet Muhammad's wives and other Muslim women in his community participated in political life, swearing allegiance to the leader of their choice, and advising the Prophet on matters of state, including even military strategy. Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn practised politics while observing the veil, as portrayed in Ibn Wāṣil's text. Neither princess found the veil an obstacle to achieving her political aims. They both respected the tenets of their religion, including their responsibilities as women. They provide strong proof that Muslim women can be successful, even in male domains, and despite operating from behind the veil.

By comparing his attitude towards regent women with his view regarding female monarchs, this chapter has shown that he gives his support strongly toward the former

system. The Ayyubid regent women did not harm their citizens by any political mistake; they respected the roles assigned to them according to their religion and traditional system in Islamic society when dealing with men. They worked in the interest of their children and their states and not out of self-interest, a factor that made them more effective and influential rulers. Finally, some early and modern scholars have paid particular attention to recording Shajar al-Durr's reign while ignoring the Ayyubid regent women's rule, and this resulted in highlighting the negative role of women in politics. The foregoing chapter gives solid evidence that Ibn Wāṣil differed from other historians in his assessment regarding this issue.

The second factor that affected Ibn Wāṣil in his judgement of female regents was his own personality. In various passages of *Mufarrij*, he shows both respect and sympathy for women. Thus, it seems that the success of the Ayyubid princesses made him appreciate their efforts, especially when he compared between them and what he knew about some other regent women in Islamic history who had caused their children's thrones to be lost. The third factor is that one of Ibn Wāṣil's aims in writing his book was to convey wisdom to other politicians in later periods. Of course, he would have found in these princesses' careers, and especially that of Ḍayfa Khātūn, rich material from which both men and women could learn many political lessons. In his *Mufarrij* he shows deep understanding of the political environment around him. He deftly portrays the nature of the political relationships among the Ayyubid members. He was an eye witness to some of the political events, which would have allowed him to understand the personalities of many of the Ayyubid members and their social status; this unique position permitted him to expect or guess some political actions and their consequence.

The fourth factor was that the political manner of these two princesses was convincing, not just for Ibn Wāṣil, but also for other contemporary elites, even the Abbasid caliph. They gave the impression of being faithful regents. They were not avaricious: they took care of the needs of their citizens, and not their own interests. They did not ask for titles, and this made them trustworthy in the eyes of the public, especially Ḍayfa Khātūn, who maintained Aleppo's prestige until her death. According to Ibn Wāṣil's presentation of the Ayyubid princesses there was no serious criticism of their political action, in contrast with Shajar al-Durr. It seems that the era of the regent women during the Ayyubid period can be counted as the golden age of regent women in Islamic history. But Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn upheld an honourable image of women regents. They served as good models to be followed by other women. Their policy in dealing with political events had a significant impact on their states. Their biographies can be considered an honourable addition to the political history of women.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the Introduction, recent studies have largely demonstrated the extent of the discrepancy in historical narratives about the political role of women. There is widespread agreement among modern scholars that early historians portrayed men as the only actors on the stage while at the same time ignoring the roles played by women. It is a common but oversimplified explanation to state that the under-reporting of women as actors on the political stage has been due to the fact that the majority of historians and historiographers were men. As has been shown in the preceding chapters, close reading of the historical text can reveal, not only insights about political activities of women, but evidence that some of those male historians were paying attention to the political actions of women.

To that purpose, the current research has presented a study of medieval Islamic historiography focusing on Ibn Wāṣil and his work, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*. This research has investigated the extent to which Ibn Wāṣil used his knowledge and understanding of political facts in order to present and illustrate the events in his own time about Ayyubid politician women in the late Ayyubid dynasty. Moreover, it has identified the main political presence of the Ayyubid women within his text as queens and as regents. Scanning the text reveals motives behind Ibn Wāṣil's unique writing about women, whilst an analysis of the context of his work clarifies the ideological stances that governed the style and content of his narrations. This allowed an evaluation of the accuracy of his text, which provided a multifaceted view of the pertinent subject. The central aim of this research has been stated at the outset: In what way does Ibn Wāṣil evaluate the political role of the women in the late Ayyubid dynasty, and what factors

shaped his evaluation? Answering the questions that are posed in the research can be partially achieved by concentrating on his life, his relationships with the authorities, and the general context of the Ayyubid era. Crucially, it is by also comparing his account of the Ayyubid women with those of contemporary and near-contemporary historians which has allowed the researcher to uncover and identify his exact attitude toward their political role.

Ibn Wāṣil is one of the few male historians who pay relatively close attention to the history of women. In various places in his text, he provides a number of narratives about women, in surprising detail, which dramatically illustrate his respect and appreciation of the women who played significant roles in the political life of the late Ayyubid dynasty. In Ibn Wāṣil's report about the political incidents in the late Ayyubid house, he demonstrates keen observation and a profound understanding of the political atmosphere. In his presentation he shows his positive attitude about the political interventions of women—and overall he projects a greater approval for their actions than he does for the political actions of their male counterparts.

In Ibn Wāṣil's evaluation the Ayyubid women are, by and large, ideal examples of politicians. He finds in their careers many political lessons that he feels worthy to be recorded in *Mufarrij* for generations of men and women in his time and in any subsequent Islamic eras. This explains why he devotes relatively extensive space and attention to them in his text, for he concludes that those women managed to protect and preserve their dynasties and their heirs despite numerous external existential threats and serious conflicts and competition among their family members. They are wise in their political decisions and show great acumen throughout their careers—more so than many political men in their own families, such as al-ʻĀdil Abū Bakr II and al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh. In

comparison to both those sultans, in Ibn Wāṣil's assessment the Ayyubid female regents demonstrate clear effectiveness in their political abilities. Shajar al-Durr commits a gross political miscalculation in having her second husband assassinated, but she shows great political acuity in planning and arranging for the handover of the throne to al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh after the (natural) death of her first husband, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, and in her dealings with the Crusaders after the death of al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, as detailed in Chapter Three.

Investigating *Mufarrij* in depth regarding the political role of women reveals several factors that contributed to the formation of Ibn Wāṣil's point of view about the political actions of the Ayyubid women. The first and most influential factor is his religious training and beliefs. This research has highlighted the religious underpinnings of Muslim male attitudes in the medieval period about certain issues related to women. Ibn Wāṣil's training as a jurist and judge of Islamic law had a huge impact on his writing. His religious education taught him that women had practised politics since the time of the prophet Muḥammad. He studied the Islamic canon regarding women practising politics in Islam, and had a clear understanding of what they are permitted and forbidden to do. What is more, there are several points in *Mufarrij* that can be interpreted with reference to his religious background. For instance, unlike some of his contemporaries, he avoids using sarcasm or a mocking tone in his writing about Shajar al-Durr; he also avoids reporting hearsay about her that he believes to be rumour. However, it is important to stress that his studies in various fields of secular knowledge also influenced his record and his views, as discussed in Chapter Two and mentioned below. This is in contrast with his contemporaries, Ibn al-Jawzī and Abū Shāma, whose historiographical writings appear to be influenced solely by their religious backgrounds.

The second major factor contributing to the development of Ibn Wāṣil's attitudes regarding political women is his relationships with the Ayyubid rulers and their courtiers. The fact that he attended their courts and accompanied a number of them on some of their journeys led to his enhanced understanding and insightful observations of the political activities of those Ayyubid royals. The third factor that formed his attitude toward the political roles of the Ayyubid women is his multi-disciplined background. As discussed in Chapter Two, Ibn Wāṣil was not only a historian, but was also trained and accomplished in poetry, a mathematics, logic, and philosophy. The sort of knowledge that came from such a well-rounded education and experience added a distinctive character to his *Mufarrij* and to his analyses and evaluations of the political roles of the Ayyubid women. The fourth factor affecting his worldview vis-à-vis women in power is that he was well travelled, and as a consequence he was witness to a number of critically important historical events which took place in his lifetime. Indeed, his writing is distinguished by the first-hand accounts he chronicles, many of which no other historian has recorded.

To elaborate on the foregoing, this research has explored the impact that Ibn Wāṣil's relations with the Ayyubid rulers had on his account of the political roles of the Ayyubid women. It has shown that the historian had a vital relationship with a number of Ayyubid sultans and kings. An example of this is the sultan al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh, who was more of a technocrat than a politician. The historian regularly attended the sultan's court, at which the two discussed scientific topics. This allowed the chronicler to observe the sultan's personality and to evaluate him as a politician. Although the sultan treated him with a great deal of respect, Ibn Wāṣil does not let this influence him in his view about the sultan; on the contrary, he criticizes the sultan for his errors in judgement and behaviour, as when the latter failed to Keep his victory over King Louis IX during the Seventh Crusade, as described in Chapter Three. Additionally, Ibn Wāṣil censures the

sultan for his treatment of the latter's father's wife and courtiers. Ibn Wāṣil also had an excellent relationship with King al-Naṣir Dāwūd of Kerak, which had begun during their fathers' time. The king treated the historian with high respect. In his accounts, however, the historian does not praise the king as a politician; instead, he lauds him as a poet, which indicates that the historian did not permit personal bias to influence what he wrote about the political actors whose lives he documented. In 640/1242, Ibn Wāṣil left for Baghdad, accompanying King al-Muẓaffar Maḥmud of Hama, a journey which would take two months. Being continuously in close quarters with the Ayyubid ruler, and the on-going conversation that took place, generated a rich source of material for the chronicler, which enabled him to provide reliable information about political facts related to the political women of the Ayyubid dynasty. Keeping in mind that Ibn Wāṣil's main function in his *Mufarrij* is to observe the political manner of the Ayyubid rulers, the present research has demonstrated that the historian's good relationships with the male Ayyubid monarchs did not have any impact on his evaluation of their political behaviour. In the same vein, his assessment of the Ayyubid women is based merely on their political behaviour, for his loyalty is consistently shown to be, not to any particular ruler, but to the dynasty and to the larger concept of the Islamic nation-state.

This approach of Ibn Wāṣil's toward the royal court allowed him to form extensive and strong relations with the courtiers. The foregoing study has confirmed that those people were essential sources of his knowledge in writing about the Ayyubid rulers, females as well as males. One of the most crucial of his sources was prince Ḥusām al-Dīn bin ʻAlī al-Hadhbānī. Ibn Wāṣil's friendship with the prince allowed him to close access to historical incidents, and as a result the historian writes with an insider's perceptiveness and authority about the political atmosphere around him. Ibn Wāṣil was able to have direct access to many official documents; for instance, one crucial document that he had

the opportunity to read at that time was the forged letter attributed to al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn that was given to the latter's son.

Thanks to his intelligence, Ibn Wāṣil took care to study the personalities of the Ayyubid kings and to understand their psychological states. This acuity was especially useful during the period from the death of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn until the death of Shajar al-Durr: Ibn Wāṣil demonstrates to his readers that he knew that al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn would prefer Ḥusām al-Dīn bin ʻAlī al-Hadhbānī over Fakhr al-Dīn bin al-Shaykh as his successor.

Another significant source of information about the Ayyubid women is the statesman Ibn al-ʻAdīm, who was the only first-hand source regarding the life of Ḍayfa Khātūn, Ibn Wāṣil met Ibn al-ʻAdīm, and they spoke about the regent khātūn and her court. He also made judicious use of material found in Ibn al-ʻAdīm's chronicle in order to write in detail about her political career. With respect to Hama's history in the late Ayyubid period, Ibn Wāṣil's brother was an important source for the historian about Ghāziyya Khātūn and her son, King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II. Ibn Wāṣil made successful use of his network of relations with the courtiers and his excellent skills as a historian to recognize and analyse certain issues of great significance. For instance, it can be inferred from his report in *Mufarrij* that he deduced that despite Shajar al-Durr's command of her first husband's affections, she had not had a significant impact on his political career, and that it was only after his death that her strong personality and political talents become apparently. A similar claim can be made about al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī and his wife Ḍayfa Khātūn, according to Ibn Wāṣil's account, as discussed in Chapter Four.

Ibn Wāṣil's abilities as a proto-sociologist appear clearly in several places in his work, such his long report about the Mongols and their customs, traditions, religion, and

society. His knowledge influenced him in his evaluation of the main actors in the late Ayyubid period in general, and of the women of that era in particular. In his depiction he avoids impassioned language and presents his report dispassionately, providing evidence for any claims he makes and supporting his arguments accordingly: this is in keeping with the rationalist philosophy he espoused, as mentioned in Chapter Two. He is the only historian who posits a reasonable explanation for Shajar al-Durr's decision to order the killing of her husband, al-Muʿizz Aybak. By linking cultural factors with individual behaviour, he proposes that a central factor leading to her deed is her Turkish origins. He examined carefully and in scientific fashion the forged letter that was allegedly penned by al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn. By comparing the handwriting of the letter with that in documents known to have been written by al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, Ibn Wāṣil leads his readers to conclude the truth without any overt influence from the chronicler himself. These and many other examples in *Mufarrij* show his desire to seek the truth by using his intelligence and verbal eloquence to display logical evidence.

Ibn Wāṣil's education in the field of philosophy had an impact on his views regarding the political activities of the Ayyubid women. When comparing his statements on this topic to those of his contemporary historians, it is evident that his own rationalist paradigm led him to be more accepting of political roles for women. He became open minded in the way that reflects an optimistic outlook, as apparent even in the title of his *Mufarrij*, as discussed in Chapter Two. This appeared clearly in his attitude toward the momentous changes that took place in the political situation in the late Ayyubid house, especially with regard to the political role of the Ayyubid women.

Travelling in general can expose a person to others from different backgrounds, ideologies, cultures, and religions. Interacting with people from outside one's own social

group can lead one to learn, understand, and appreciate different cultures, traditions, customs, geographies, and histories. For Ibn Wāṣil, his travels expanded the breadth and depth of his knowledge about the regions through which he journeyed. He also had opportunities to meet a number of *'ulamā'*, to study from them or to discuss scholarly issues. Moreover, travel allowed him to gain experience in dealing with people from different places. This research has shed light on the significant impact which his travels made on Ibn Wāṣil's account about the political women of the Ayyubid house. Ibn Wāṣil travelled widely within the Islamic world through Syria, Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq, and outside the Islamic world to Sicily. His movements allowed him to be eyewitness to a number of historical events, and gave him the opportunity to meet a great many Ayyubid rulers, statesmen, and *'ulamā'*. Those people were valuable sources for his *Mufarrij*.

He started his travels upon leaving his hometown of Hama in 604/ 1243; he would eventually return to Hama in 690/1219. Some of those whom he met were most influential in providing the chronicler with material for his work: the kings of Hama, al-Muẓaffar Maḥmud and his son al-Muẓaffar Maḥmud II; courtiers such as Prince Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Hadhbānī and Ibn al-'Adīm, and the *'ulamā'* like al-Shaykh 'Alam al-Dīn Qayṣar and Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, who were employed by Ayyubid monarchs. It is obvious that he enjoyed the trust of these people, for they chose to be in his company; he attended their courts and accompanied some of them on their journeys. Certainly, as a historian he spoke with them about other political figures; he used his intelligence to examine and evaluate their reactions about significant news or political events. It was his chance to study these rulers' personalities and to observe their manners. As a result he received and transmitted much information from them. Of most relevance to this study is that Ibn Wāṣil's travels allowed him proximity to these leaders, decision-makers, and other historians, which in conjunction with the knowledge he gained from travelling,

provided him with a deeper understanding of the relationships among Egypt, Hama, and Aleppo during the regency of the Ayyubid princesses and Shajar al-Durr.

Travelling outside the Islamic world to Sicily allowed him to live for some months in a region that was strikingly different from his own homeland in terms of culture, religion, and environment. He attended the German king Manfred's court. It was great chance for him to see a unique relationship between Muslims and Christians under the rule of a Christian king. He had time to exchange views and knowledge with the king and others in Manfred's court. It is certain that this journey had a considerable impact on Ibn Wāṣil's writing of *Mufarrij* and the way in which he treated and assessed the political legacy of the Ayyubid women.

Ibn Wāṣil lived in a time and place when women of the nobility were relatively respected by their societies. Definitely, this had a considerable influence on his attitude regarding the political achievements of women in his era. His presence in Egypt during the Seventh Crusade campaign allowed him to be an eyewitness of a number of significant political incidents, and to be close to the court to observe and report on what he saw and heard. For instance, he managed to consult al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's physician during the sultan's morbid illness; in consequence, the chronicler was one of the very few people who expected the sultan's death. He was in Hama with King al-Manṣūr Muḥammad II when the news came of the Muslim victory over the Crusaders. He was able to observe the Muslims' reaction toward the improvement that happened in Egypt toward the vacancy of the throne at that time. Changing his location at various times allowed him to obtain a fuller picture of the personalities of key players like al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, his wife, his son, and others. Consequently, he could compare the different accounts that he would have heard from several people, investigate the matter, and then

match it with the subject of the reports (usually a member of the elite) based on what he knew and could confirm about them. This explains why he avoids mentioning certain details and focuses on others. Ibn Wāṣil can be counted as one of the most reliable sources about this period, even if, in some cases, he had been influenced by his emotions toward some people around him, such as his friend Ḥusām al-Dīn.

The author of *Mufarrij* lived in the late Ayyubid period; he saw the deep disputes and competition between them to expand their zones of influence, each at the expense of the other. This conflict forced some of them to make alliances with the forces that threatened the Ayyubid themselves, such as the Crusaders, in order to gain the upper hand over their close rivals. In contrast, the Ayyubid women strove to save their family's throne exhibiting wisdom and character in dealing with political issues, and this was especially true of the princess regents. Definitely, Ibn Wāṣil compared the actions and reactions of each Ayyubid ruler—female as well as male—in their engagement with these disputes. This comparison distinguished the women over the men.

It must be remembered that Ibn Wāṣil himself did not have any direct access to the courts of the Ayyubid women. Thus, he did not have much opportunity to study their personalities from a close vantage point. He had to judge according to what he had heard about them from their courtiers, such as Ibn al-ʻAdīm, and others who interacted with them with a high degree of familiarity, such as a number of Ayyubid monarchs. This means that the institution of the veil (see Chapter Four) did not hinder him from performing his job as a historian. However, he avoids reporting on events behind the curtains, such as usually took place between women in the harem section—whether between noble women or among the *jawārī* class, such as the relationships between

Shajar al-Durr and al-Mu‘izz Aybak’s first wife, or her relationship with Umm al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr II—unless it had political significance.

During the era of the late Ayyubid dynasty, which includes the lives and legacies of these powerful political women, Ibn Wāṣil was the closest of his contemporary historians to the Ayyubid court, not just in Egypt but also in Syria. This study has clarified that in Egypt he was the only contemporary historian close to the Ayyubid court of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn and his wife, Shajar al-Durr. He was an eyewitness to the momentous events at that time: especially, the political turbulence that occurred in Egypt and Syria when Shajar al-Durr became sultana. He is the only known historian who describes these events and the consequences of this historical movement—right though to her second husband al-Mu‘izz Aybak’s death and her own subsequent death at the hands of his Mamluks—in remarkable detail. Ibn al-Jawzī was close to some Ayyubid figures, but not as close as Ibn Wāṣil was. As a result, the latter was able to report the history of Shajar al-Durr far more comprehensively than the former. In Syria, Ibn al-Jawzī and Abū Shāma were present as eyewitnesses; nonetheless, Ibn Wāṣil is the only chronicler who adequately documents the lives and reigns of Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn. During the regency period of Khātūn, when the historians mention any political action in Aleppo, they mainly refer to ‘the Aleppo army’ or the ‘Aleppans’, whereas Ibn Wāṣil and his friend Ibn al-‘Adīm refer to Ḍayfa clearly, by using her name or her titles ’al-Ṣaḥiba’, ‘al-Malika’. Moreover, the near-contemporary historians Ibn Taghrībirdī and Ibn Kathīr recorded her name incorrectly, calling her ‘Ṣafya Khātūn’.

Ibn Wāṣil is the only historian who appreciates Ḍayfa Khātūn’s political role, despite the fact that, unlike Ibn al-‘Adīm, he was not one of her courtiers. In Ibn Wāṣil’s assessment, she showed various aspects of her political personality in dealing with state

matters. She began her grandson's reign with very successful steps to consolidate his control of the throne. These steps gave her political weight with the other Ayyubid rulers. In comparing Ibn Wāṣil's assessment of Ḍayfa Khātūn with those of other early historians such as Ibn Kathīr, the former finds that she demonstrated excellent skill in dealing with the Khwārizmian threat. She was able to steer Aleppo through this violent period in a way that demonstrated her political acumen. Ibn Kathīr, in contrast, ignores any effort by the Khātūn; in his presentation, he makes the King of Homs al-Manṣūr Ibrāhīm the hero of the political event, and 'Aleppo' in conjunction with other Islamic forces were his helpers.

In the history of Hama, Ghāzīyya Khātūn's career is mentioned in *Mufarrij* quite briefly relative to the lives of the other two Ayyubid women leaders. Nevertheless, Ibn Wāṣil's account can be considered the most informative source on her life and political career. He is the only known historian who shows her peaceful personality. The other contemporary historians, and some near-contemporary chroniclers, do not mention her at all; they refer instead to her son, King Manṣūr Muḥammad II, when discussing any political incidents in Hama at that time. Ibn Wāṣil also surpasses the Ayyubid king of Hama, the historian Abū al-Fidā', in writing about the history of Hama during the regency period of Ghāzīyya Khātūn. Due to the fact that Ibn al-'Adīm's history is about Aleppo, Ibn Wāṣil naturally eclipsed him as well, in writing about Ghāzīyya Khātūn. Ibn Wāṣil also tries in his presentation to draw a link between the political comportment of regents and the political conduct of the young kings of Aleppo and Hama, to show the extensive impact of the female regents on their underage royal wards: this level of influence is a unique feature of regent women that is not available for regent men.

With respect to Shajar al-Durr, the general attitude of Ibn Wāṣil toward her political role is similar to that of other early historians. They appreciate her deeds during the Seventh Crusade and upon her husband al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's death. What is unique in his record of her life is that he draws political lessons from it, writing in detail about what he views as the negative impact of having a queen in Muslim society.

As explained in Chapter Three, during the era in which Ibn Wāṣil lived and wrote, the role of the *jawārī* in Muslim society was an important one; thus it is supposed that he comprehended not only the significant function of the *jawārī* in Islamic political life, but also how this role was connected to their rights in Islamic law. This supposition has strong support due to Ibn Wāṣil's his religious training as a judge and jurist, and his aforementioned practice of ethnography and sociology in his observations and writing. These contributed to his knowledge of the *jawārī*, their history, and their social and political roles in the preceding eras and during his own times. It is notable that in his *Mufarrij* does he writes about members of the slave class as he does about members of his own or any other class: he evaluates their actions and intentions on the merits, without prejudice to their social status.

Ibn Wāṣil writes about the *jawārī* as an integral part of the Muslim society at that time. As he depicts in *Mufarrij*, they performed important functions in many arenas, including role in culture, society, art, and indeed in politics. Therefore, in contrast with some of his contemporary historians, Ibn Wāṣil, presents Shajar al-Durr in an objective light. Due to his religious training, it is to be expected that he would disapprove of a woman taking on the role of queen, in the sense of a supreme ruler. Indeed, he does register his views about this; but he manages to remain balanced in his evaluation of her and of the effects of actions on Muslim history. Ibn Wāṣil demonstrates that he is a

historian first and foremost: he is aware of his own biases and endeavours to overcome them in order to interpret the facts rationally. As discussed in Chapter Three, he expresses his appreciation of Shajar al-Durr's significant contribution in safeguarding the Islamic state during the period leading up to and during Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn's death, but he also criticizes her for assuming the monarchy and for ordering the assassination of her second husband.

It is not apparent in Ibn Wāṣil's account that he had gender biases in his assessment of the Ayyubid members. In his record, the histories of men and women are treated equally, in that he shows preference for those whom he judges to have been successful leaders and politicians. In *Mufarrij*, each of the Ayyubid women rulers is given her right to be recorded according to her career. Ibn Wāṣil's depiction of the history of Aleppo during the regency of Ḍayfa Khātūn is detailed. He found in her life many worthwhile political lessons to be heeded by subsequent politicians, whether men or women. He displays a special regard for the women, however, as they practised politics while respecting Islamic laws and mores regarding the veil.

The research argues that Ibn Wāṣil particularly admired Ḍayfa Khātūn, and posits the reasons for this. In his presentation, she was wise and intelligent. She managed to win the respect of all the other Ayyubid kings, and in fact some of those kings sought her help. She maintained Aleppo's prestige as it had been in the previous era. Ḍayfa was able to deal successfully with any threat; at the same time she respected the ties of kinship and never sacrificed any of them. She was the only Ayyubid ruler who changed her loyalty to the Seljuk Sultan of Rum, Kaykhusraw II.

Moreover, Ibn Wāṣil sometimes defends her reaction to those who are against her presence in the political scene. He agrees with her attitude toward her brother, Sultan al-

Kāmil Muḥammad. Additionally, while Ibn Wāṣil condemns Sultan al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh for his method of consolidating the foundations of his rule at the beginning of his reign, the chronicler supports Ḍayfa Khātūn in her approach to the same issue: at the beginning of her career she managed to take decisive and successful steps to show her power and to give Aleppo political weight among other Ayyubid states.

In Ibn Wāṣil's view as expressed in *Mufarrij*, women can be skilful political leaders, despite not having the formal training for these positions that their male counterparts would have. His account of Ḍayfa's political career demonstrates his belief that women are mentally and emotionally capable of planning and executing military strategy, and that their supposedly weaker physiques are not a handicap to their success. In his opinion, Ḍayfa Khātūn proved her ability in both domestic and foreign policy, and this is the record that history should preserve.

Ibn Wāṣil's attitude toward the regents and their role in preserving and safeguarding the state has been explored. It has been shown that he assesses the political performances of the two regent women of the late Ayyubid dynasty in a positive light. His assessment is based on several reasons. Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāzīyya Khātūn provide solid proof that Muslim women can seek power and practise it, and moreover that they can be more successful at this than men. Thus, he appreciates the Ayyubid princesses' efforts, especially in comparing them with certain other regent women in Islamic history who caused trouble for their wards and their kingdoms by their unwise governance. There is a widespread notion in Islamic society that when it comes to political roles for women, a consort or regent position is more acceptable than a role as an independent queen. Ibn Wāṣil grew up in such a society; hence, he adopts the same view, and is favourably disposed toward roles that he views as compatible with Islamic law and the structure of

Islamic society. However, he bases his opinion on reason and fact: in that period of history and in that part of the world, there were inevitably some duties that could only be performed by men.

Despite Ibn Wāṣil's views about the appropriate context for women's political leadership, in his evaluation Shajar-al-Durr was the most capable person on the political scene during the death of her husband al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, especially in comparison to King al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh. He also opined that the Ayyubid princesses perfectly practised their role as regents of their young kings. Through their actions they appeared to have genuinely cared for the general interest of their states and their citizens. This is in contrast to Shajar al-Durr's aim, which was to attain the throne for herself. Ibn Wāṣil does not mention any political mistakes that the regent princesses may have made; he implicates Shajar al-Durr, on the other hand, for committing an enormous mistake which had a significant negative impact on the stability of Muslims in Egypt and Syria. Moreover, it is evident that Ibn Wāṣil appreciates how each khātūn managed to deal with political affairs without needing to contravene Islamic regulations regarding separation of the sexes. Another important point in this regard is that Shajar al-Durr seemed to compete politically with her male peers. The Ayyubid princesses, by contrast, did not ignore the crucial political role of men; instead, they respected the presence of men in their courts, and benefitted from the courtiers' political experience. Moreover, they did not seek titles and honorifics as Shajar al-Durr did: the titles they were known by were bestowed on them by contemporary historians. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, Ibn Wāṣil approved of the role played by these women regents; his statements indicate that he felt pleased that Islamic teachings were being revived because these Ayyubid princesses had applied the principle of consultation (*shūrā*) during their rule: a practice had once been the rule rather than the exception in Islamic governance, but that had by that time long been neglected.

Aleppo and Hama enjoyed stability under the rule of the Ayyubid princesses. Thus, they were able to focus on the welfare of their states, a fact which reflects their intelligence in playing the political game. In contrast, Shajar al-Durr spent seven years in power with her husband, but she was in continuous conflict until her death. A final point: one of Ibn Wāṣil's aims in writing his book was to convey wisdom to other politicians in later periods. Of course, he would have found in these princesses' careers, and especially that of Ḍayfa Khātūn, rich material from which both men and women could learn many political lessons.

Contribution

This study has revealed some crucial facts about *Mufarrij*. Understanding the historian's objective in writing his historical text is a crucial first step in studying the text, for this aim would have a substantial impact on the way in which he shapes his historical report. The historian places all his ideas, statements, and knowledge under the service of his aim. This appeared clearly in Ibn Wāṣil's historical works *Mufarrij* and *al-Ṣāliḥī*.

This historian could alter the way in which events are understood and interpreted simply via his style and the manner in which he chooses to present his history of women. Compare, for instance, the report of Ibn Wāṣil with that of Ibn al-Jawzī about king al-Ḥāfiẓ Arslān Shāh when he gave control of part of his state to his sister, Ḍayfa Khātūn, as described in Chapter Four. The latter historian does not mention Ḍayfa at all in connection with this transaction, giving the impression that the king was more powerful than his sister; the author of *Mufarrij*, on the other hand, appreciates her political role and infers that the brother ceded this territory to his sister because she was an effective and powerful leader who could be trusted to save his state.

Although many early historians state in their works that they were selective in what they reported and took their information from trusted sources, it is a fact that historians' beliefs and ideologies can influence their presentation of the narrative. In his assessment of the political role of Ayyubid women Ibn Wāṣil presents a positive narrative, since he believes that there were some strong Ayyubid rulers in the late period of that dynasty. This is in contrast to his contemporary, the historian Abū Shāma, who thinks that the late Ayyubid rulers were weak; this assessment on the part of Abū Shāma had such an impact on his writing about the Ayyubids that he completely ignores the role of women in his historical text.

If any other historian helped the main historian in editing or organizing the historical text, a superficial reading of the text will not help in noting the differences therein between the contribution of the main historian and that of his assistant or apprentice. A close reading of the text can uncover whether the historian is the only author of the text or another person has authored even a small part of the text. Studying the language of Ibn Wāṣil made it easy to identify his attitude toward Shajar al-Durr, even though his student had helped to write the final part of his *Mufarrij*.

This thesis has presented a unique angle in its approach to studying the history of women in general and their political role in particular. This study shows that examining the historical text in depth could alter what had been heretofore commonly accepted as historical facts. Moreover, it gives solid evidence that there are some early historians who supported political roles for women. They did not just write conventionally about famous women as they did with men, they also recorded the history of women who are not as well known, such as Ḍayfa Khātūn and Ghāziyya Khātūn. This could also alter the

commonly held idea among modern historians that the history of women was ignored by their early predecessors.

This research is one of relatively few studies of the text of Ibn Wāṣil's *Mufarrij*. It covers the topic of the historian's attitude toward the political role of the Ayyubid women. It is hoped that additional studies based on *Mufarrij* will be undertaken. There is a wide gap in the literature on the historiography of Muslim women, and a variety of research studies ought to be done in order to fill this void. Such investigation may shed light on the history of other 'forgotten' political women like those of the late Ayyubid period. Such research could also unveil the exploits of Muslim women in all aspects of Islamic society, so that it no longer remains limited to observations of such women's efforts regarding charity or architecture.

This present thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge of the political historiography of women in Medieval Islamic history. It does so by introducing the work of one early historian who not only was paying attention to the political activities of the women in positions of leadership during his time, but took them seriously and wrote about their contributions in a positive light.

Appendix

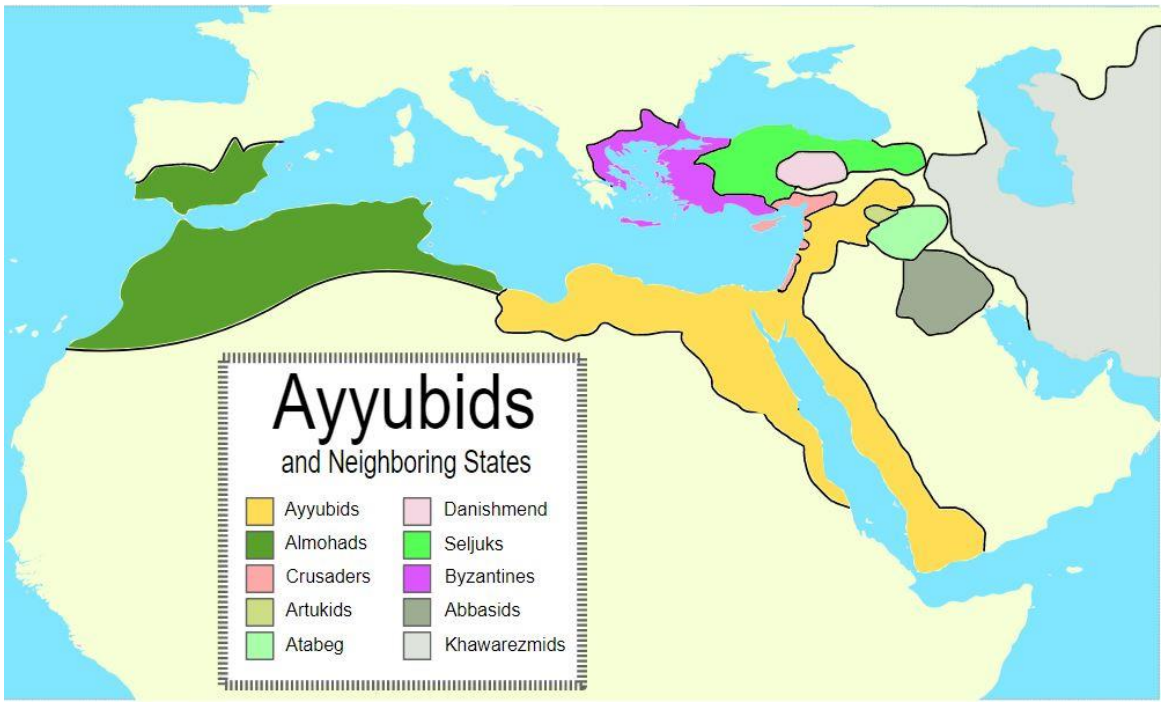


***Figure 3**. Map of the late Ayyubid dynasty (source: Wikimedia Commons https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/Ayyubid_Dynasty.svg).*

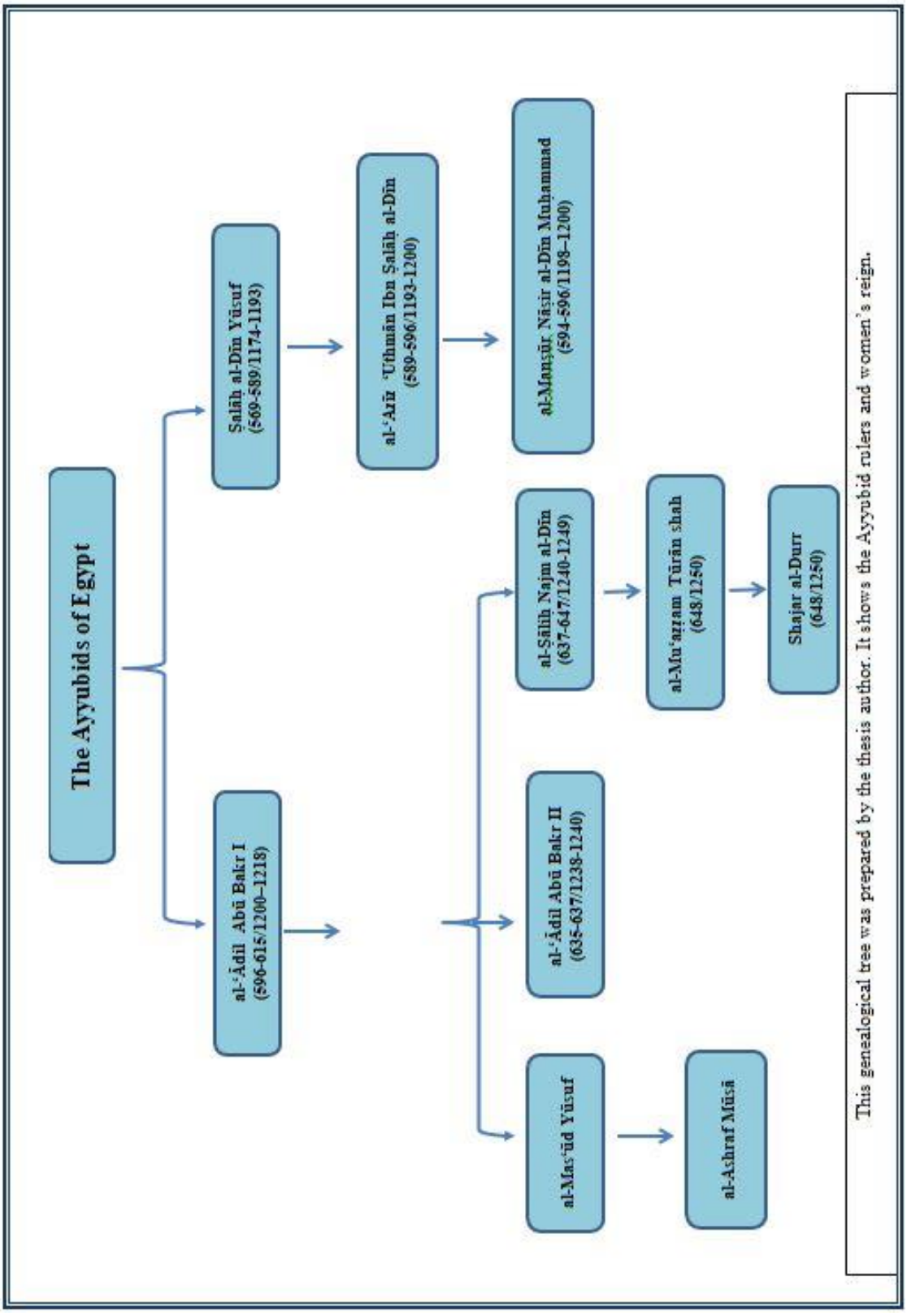


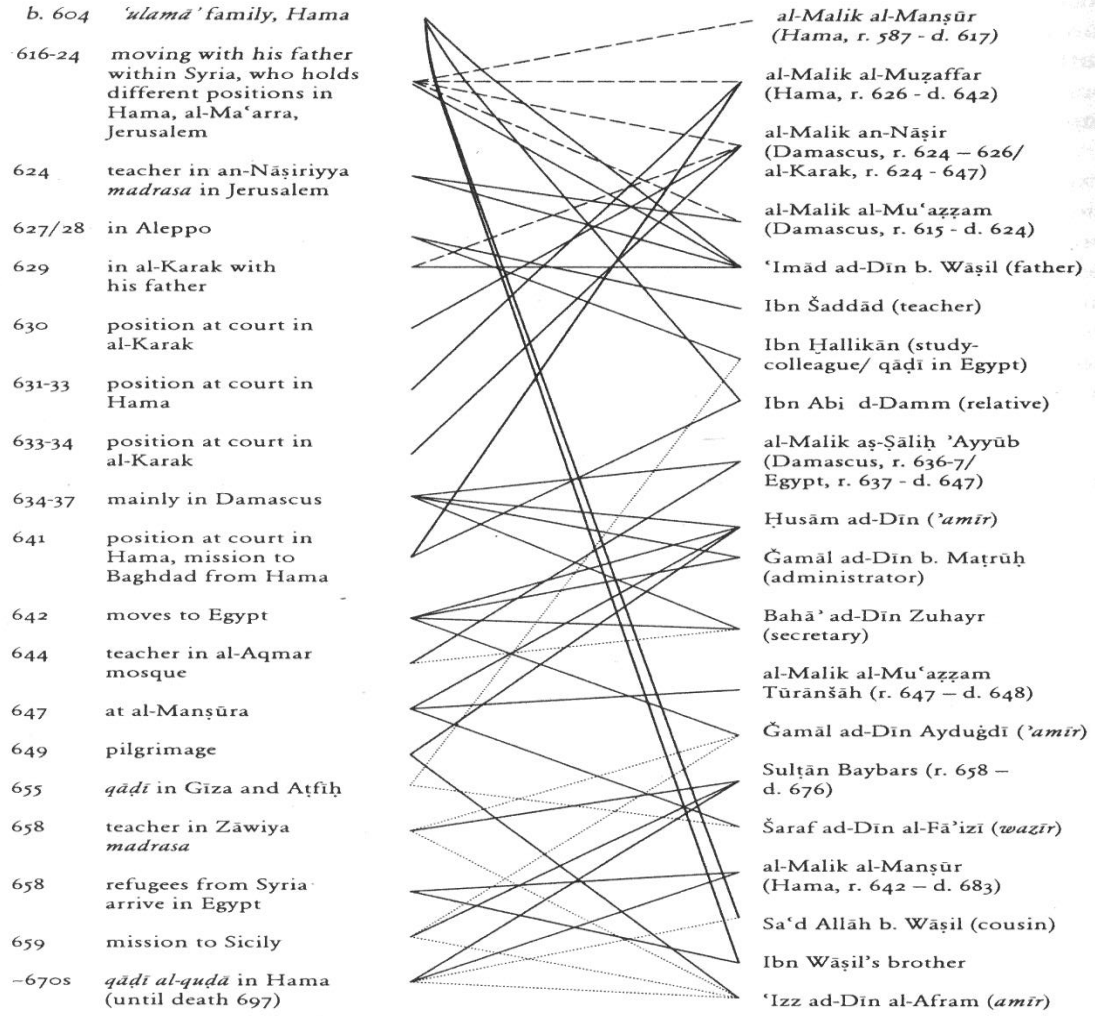
Figure 4a*. The Ayyubids of Egypt.*

Figure 4b. *The Ayyubids of Hama.*

***Figure 4c**. The Ayyubids of Aleppo.*

Hama 604-616/1207-1219	Nusaybin 641/1243	Hama 641/1243	Qus 649/1251
Al-Ma‘arra 619/1222	Mousl 641/1243	Jerusalem 641/1243	Jeddah 649/
Hama 621/1224	Tikrit 641/1243	Gaza 641/1243	Makka al-Mukarrama 649/1251
Damascus 621/1224	al-Mazrafa 641/1243	al-‘Abasya 641/1243	Madina al-Munawara 649/1251
Jerusalem 622/1225	Baghdad 641/1243	Cairo 642/1244	Yanbu‘ 649/1251
Damascus 626/1229	Tikrit 641/1243	Damascus 646/1248	Cairo 649/1251
Aleppo 627/1230	al-Musta‘smyya 641/1243	Cairo 646/1248	Giza 651/1253
Damascus 628/1231	al-‘Uqr 641/1243	al-Salihyya 647/1249	Cairo 651/1253
Kerak 629/1232	641/1243	Manzilat Hatim 647/1249	Giza 651/1253
Balqa 630/1233	Mardin 641/1243	Tilbana 647/1249	Sicily 659/1261
Hama 640/1242	Ra’s ‘Ayn 641/1243	al-Mansura 647/1249	South of Italy 659/1261
Aleppo 641/1243	Harran 641/1243	Cairo 647/1249	Alexandria 661/1263
Harran 641/1243	Aleppo 641/1243	Qalyub 648/1250	Hama 690/1290
Dunayser 641/1243	Qinnasrin 641/1243	Marsafa 648/1250	Cairo 690/1290
Mardin 641/1243	Al-Ma‘arra 641/1243	Cairo 648/1250	Hama 690-697/1290-1297

Figure 5*. Ibn Wāṣil’s journeys (source: Tadmury, ‘Introduction’, in Ibn Wāṣil,* Mufarrij, *vol. 6, p. 20).*



Note to Graphic I
Dashed lines represent indirect relationships/ appointments, e.g. Ibn Wāṣil was via his father in contact with the rulers during the first two decades of his life. Straight lines represent direct relationships/ appointments, as they are identifiable from the sources. Dotted lines represent relationships relevant for formal appointments by rulers. Dotted lines are my argument and are not explicitly stated as such in the sources. This graphic does not represent all links.

***Figure 6**. Ibn Wāṣil's relationships with the Ayyubid elites (source: Hirschler, 'Social Context', p. 330).*

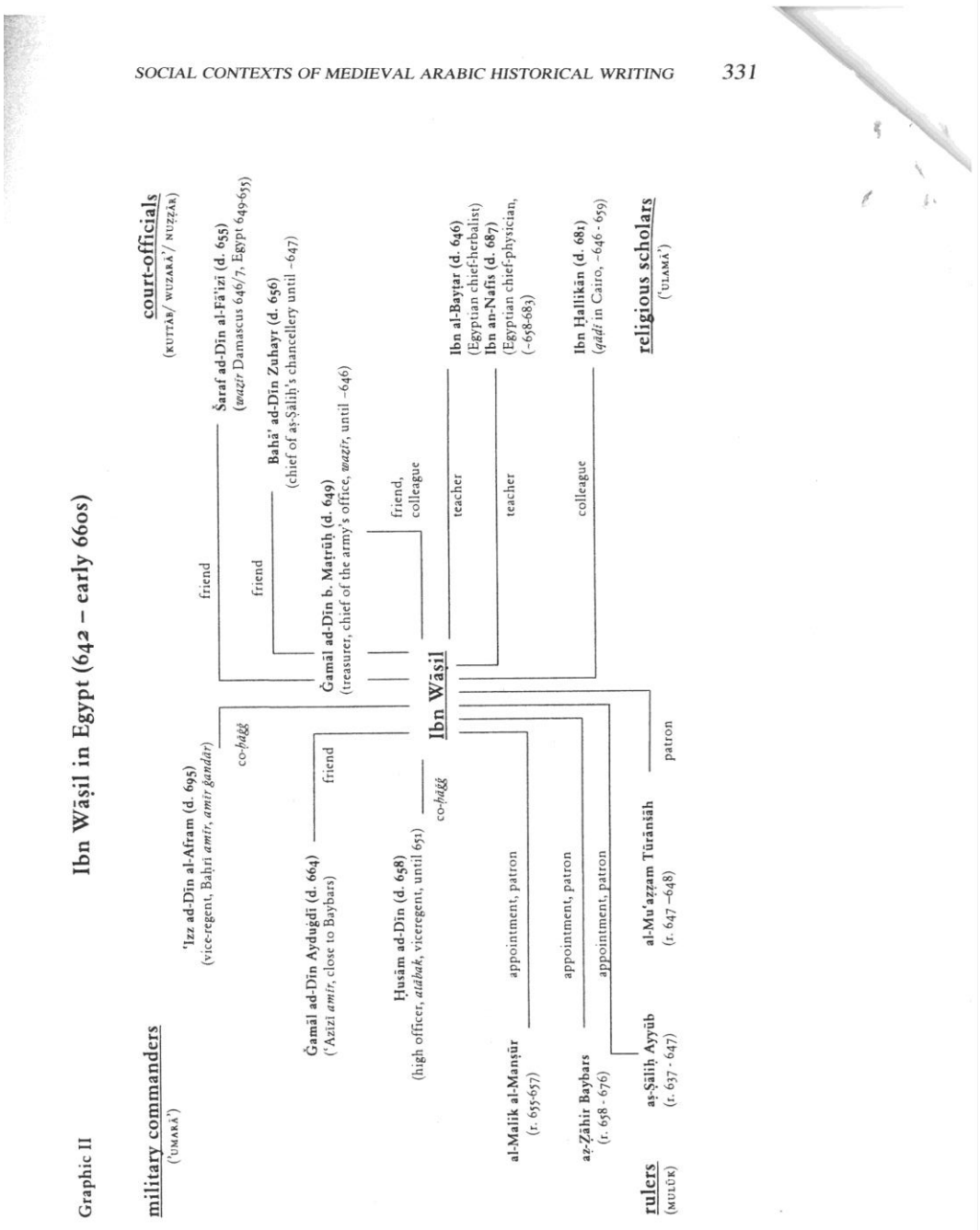


Figure 7. *Ibn Wāṣil in Egypt (source: Hirschler, 'Social Context', p. 331).*

Figure 8*. Coins. Top: gold dinar of Shajar al-Durr; middle: silver dirham of Shajar al-Durr (source: .Wolf, 'The Pen Has Extolled Her Virtues', pp. 200, 201); bottom: Gold dirham of Ḍayfa Khātūn (source: Nabraw,* Dirham ayyūbī yusajjilu muṣāhara malakīya*, p. 98).*

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